

**EUROPE AND ISRAEL:
STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP**

JOINT HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE
AND THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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EUROPE AND ISRAEL: STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 2008

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND SOUTH ASIA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 2:05 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Robert Wexler (chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe) presiding.

Mr. WEXLER. Good afternoon. The joint Europe and Middle East and South Asia Subcommittees will come to order. I want to thank the chairman of the Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee, Congressman Ackerman, and Ranking Members Gallegly and Pence for agreeing to hold this joint subcommittee hearing on the growing relationship between Europe and Israel. I also want to express my deepest gratitude to our four witnesses for testifying before us.

Today's hearing comes on the heels of Israel's 60th anniversary of independence. Six decades ago it would have been unthinkable in Europe to envision a thriving Jewish state of over 7 million people that serves as a shining example of democracy, freedom, and rule of law in a region rife with terrorism and instability.

It also would have been impossible to envision the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, speaking before the Israeli Knesset, and only a few weeks later the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, addressing that same legislative body. Both Merkel and Sarkozy articulated unwavering support for Israel and its right to self-defense, as well as a desire to strengthen bilateral relations with Israel.

Over the past six decades, European nations and institutions have played an integral role in Israel's political, economic, and security development. While the relationship has been tested at times, and European public opinion too often appears to be strikingly negative toward Israel, European-Israeli relations as well as European Union-Israeli relations have blossomed. In fact, EU-Israeli governmental relations are the strongest they have ever been.

To that end, I want to congratulate the EU and the Israeli Government for signing an agreement in Luxembourg on June 16th that will upgrade EU-Israeli relations in three defined areas: Increased diplomatic cooperation, Israel's participation in European

plans and agencies, and an examination of possible Israeli integration into the European single market.

The EU is now Israel's largest trading partner, as well as its closest geographic democratic ally, along with Turkey. The EU has been integral in efforts to thwart Iran's nuclear weapons program. Its soldiers make up the bulk of the peacekeepers in the U.N. mission stationed in Lebanon, and the EU continues to monitor the Rafah crossing point at the Gaza/Egyptian border. The EU has also stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States in support of Israel's right to self-defense, and has firmly maintained its position of working with moderate Palestinians, while isolating Hamas until it recognizes Israel, ends its support for terrorism, and abides by past agreements signed between the Palestinian Authority and Israel.

Another issue of great importance to Europeans and Israelis, as well as to Americans, is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's deepening partnership with Israel. This is a mutually beneficial relationship, and I believe the United States must take the lead in strengthening this partnership with NATO. Over the past two Congresses, I have worked closely with my colleagues in a bipartisan fashion to support enhanced NATO-Israeli relations. Last year I joined with Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and Congressmen Gary Ackerman and Gallegly in introducing H. Res. 235, which expresses congressional support for closer NATO-Israeli relations, and highlights the changing and existing security challenges facing the transatlantic alliance, including combating terrorism and the importance of further NATO expansion.

Currently, Israel participates in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, and is part of the bilateral Istanbul Cooperation track. While the NATO-Israel partnership has been fruitful, including participation in joint military operations, an Israel Navy Liaison posted at NATO Command in Naples, Italy, and a NATO Public Diplomacy seminar held this past March at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, it is my belief that NATO and Israel bilateral relations should be significantly upgraded.

As it relates to key security issues impacting the United States, Europe and Israel, I want to applaud the EU for imposing new sanctions on Iran that go beyond what the United Nations Security Council has mandated. Although I had hoped the strengthening of these sanctions would have happened sooner, it is essential that EU member states fully implement these sanctions and that we acknowledge their progress.

It is also essential that European countries, the EU and Israel work closely together to address terrorism, whether it is carried out by Hamas, Hezbollah, PKK or al-Qaeda. In this vein, our European allies and the EU must hold Hezbollah accountable for its destabilization of Lebanon and continued terrorist activity. I applaud the decision by the British Government this month to ban the military wing of Hezbollah and urge the EU and other European governments to follow Britain's lead.

I very much look forward to hearing from our witnesses about expanding European-Israeli relations as well as Israel's partnership with key European and Euro-Atlantic security institutions.

I will now turn to Chairman Ackerman for his opening remarks.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wexler follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT WEXLER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE

The joint Europe and Middle East and South Asia subcommittees will come to order.

I want to thank the Chairman of the Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee Congressman Ackerman, Ranking Members Gallegly and Pence for agreeing to hold this joint subcommittee hearing on the growing relationship between Europe and Israel. I also want to express my deepest gratitude to our four witnesses for testifying.

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It also would have been impossible to envision the Chancellor of Germany—Angela Merkel speaking before the Israeli Knesset and only a few weeks later the President of France Nicholas Sarkozy addressing that same legislative body. Both Merkel and Sarkozy articulated unwavering support for Israel and its right to self defense as well as a desire to strengthen bilateral relations with Israel.

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In fact, EU-Israeli governmental relations are at the strongest they have ever been. To that end, I want to congratulate both the EU and Israeli government for signing an agreement in Luxembourg on June 16 that will upgrade EU-Israeli relations in three areas: "increased diplomatic cooperation; Israel's participation in European plans and agencies; and an examination of possible Israeli integration into the European single market."

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The EU has also stood shoulder to shoulder with the US in support of Israel's right to self-defense and has firmly maintained its position of working with moderate Palestinians, while isolating Hamas until it recognizes Israel, ends its support for terrorism and abides by past agreements signed between the Palestinian Authority and Israel.

Another issue of great importance to Europeans and Israelis, as well as to the US, is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) deepening partnership with Israel. This is a mutually beneficial relationship and I believe the US must take the lead in strengthening this partnership. Over the past two Congresses, I have worked closely with my colleagues in a bipartisan fashion to support enhanced NATO-Israeli relations. Last year, I joined with Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Congressmen Ackerman and Gallegly in introducing H. Res. 235—which expresses congressional support for closer NATO-Israeli relations and highlights the changing and existing security challenges facing the Transatlantic alliance, including combating terrorism and the importance of further NATO expansion.

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As it relates to key security issues impacting the United States, Europe and Israel I want to applaud the EU for imposing new sanctions on Iran that go beyond what the United Nations Security Council has mandated. Although I had hoped the strengthening of these sanctions would have happened sooner—it is essential that EU member states fully implement these sanctions.

It is also essential that European countries, the EU and Israel work closely together to address terrorism whether it is carried out by Hamas, Hezbollah, PKK or Al Qaeda. In this vein, our European allies and the EU must hold Hezbollah accountable for its destabilization of Lebanon and continued terrorist activity. I applaud the decision by the British government this month to ban the military wing

of Hezbollah and urge the EU and other European governments to follow Britain's lead.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about expanding European-Israeli relations as well as Israel's partnership with key European and Euro-Atlantic security institutions.

I will now turn to Chairman Ackerman for his opening remarks.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Chairman Wexler. Thank you for your leadership.

Why is this our problem? That might be the first question someone would ask about a hearing in the U.S. Congress on relations between Israel and Europe. We have strong relations with both. We cooperate with both across a range of issues, so what makes this topic worthy of our special attention?

The short answer is self-interest. The challenges in the Middle East today are not confined to that region and cannot be addressed without partnership by ourselves with the most able and effective allies we can find. In addition to the threat from al-Qaeda and like-minded terrorist organizations, there is the need to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, and particularly the question of Palestinian statehood. There are Iran's terrorist proxies that are working aggressively to destabilize the region, there is global threat of Iranian nuclear proliferation, and there are shared long-term concerns about how the people of the region can be reconciled with each other, Arabs with Persians and Kurds, Shias with Sunnis, secularists with Islamists.

These problems well exceed the ability of any one part of the triangle of the United States, the European Union or Israel to resolve on their own. Alliances, both formal and informal, are essential to the effective international politics. They must be based on shared interests, but they thrive best when bolstered with shared values.

Fortunately, between ourselves, the Europeans, and the Israelis, both conditions are clearly present. We all recognize the threats. We are all committed to democratic and liberal values, and we all recognize that action is necessary to protect our vital interests. Unfortunately, on this very strong base of agreement of outlook, there are very significant differences on responses, timing, urgency, and priority, and it is here that the work of the United States can most usefully be done.

Coordination on strategy and policy is a prerequisite for success, and there is a substantial gap to be filled in here. Many of the most difficult, but most important questions about regional security are not only unanswered, but unasked. Perhaps in a perfect world there would be an international sheriff, who, Gary Cooper-like, would take on the bad guys while the town folk watch or hide in fear. But there is no such figure, and there will never be. There is only the hope of international cooperation and cohesion to seek collective security. Such efforts carry more political weight, enjoy greater international legitimacy, and help reassure people in democratic states that their government is not off on an adventure, and they will not be stuck footing the entire bill.

The first President Bush understood this idea. The second has chosen to learn the lesson the hard way. America is at its best not in the role of the lone hero, but as a friend inspiring and supporting others in taking action they thought was beyond their ability to achieve on their own. It is this role we should be seeking

with Europe and with Israel, as an ally and a friend, encouraging them to go further than they might otherwise, and proactively seeking to resolve conflicts and to meet the challenges to international security posed by restless and ambitious states like Iran.

One more point should be noted for those in this country and abroad who are more worried about bombing Iran than about Iran with a nuclear bomb. If you want to avoid a situation where Israel feels compelled to take unilateral military action to preserve itself because its citizens are daily at risk from Iranian-backed terrorism because it lives under the shadow of tens of thousands of terrorist-controlled rockets provided by Iran, and because Iran's top politician is a Holocaust denier and refers to Israel as a dirty microbe and a savage animal, language that has already been used in this world as a prelude to genocide, then the best policy is to provide more robust guarantees for Israel's security and more tangible commitments to stopping Iran's nuclear ambitions.

There is nothing free in this world, not for us, not for Europe, not for Israel. Meeting the challenge posed by Iranian proliferation efforts, if it is truly our top priority, and one which we hope to achieve without war, means that each of us will have to sacrifice some of our other preferences. The first sacrifice we must make is the idea that each of us or any of us can go it alone.

I want to welcome our four very distinguished witnesses, look forward to hearing them, and in particular acknowledge the presence and testimony of my still very young friend, but one of very long duration, Ambassador Oded Eran. And welcome to the rest of the panel as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ackerman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GARY L. ACKERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

Why is it our problem? That might be the first question someone would ask about a hearing in the U.S. Congress on relations between Israel and Europe. We have strong relations with both, we cooperate with both across a range of issues, so what makes this topic worthy of special attention?

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Alliances, both formal and informal, are essential to effective international politics. They must be based on shared interest, but they thrive best when bolstered with shared values. Fortunately, between ourselves, the Europeans and the Israelis, both conditions are clearly present. We all recognize the threats, we are all committed to democratic and liberal values, and we all recognize that action is necessary to protect our vital interests.

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America is at its best not in the role of the lone hero, but as a friend inspiring and supporting others in taking action they thought was beyond their ability to achieve on their own. It is this role we should be seeking with Europe and with Israel, as an ally and a friend encouraging them to go further than they might otherwise in pro-actively seeking to resolve conflicts and to meet the challenges to international security posed by restless and ambitious states like Iran.

One more point should be noted for those in this country and abroad who are more worried about bombing Iran than about Iran with a nuclear bomb: If you want to avoid a situation where Israel feels compelled to take unilateral military action to preserve itself—because its citizens are daily at risk from Iranian-backed terrorism; because it lives under the shadow of tens of thousands of terrorist controlled-rockets provided by Iran; and because Iran's top politician is a Holocaust denier and refers Israel as a "dirty microbe" and "a savage animal," language that has already been used in this world as a prelude to genocide—then the best policy is to provide more robust guarantees for Israel's security, and more tangible commitments to stopping Iran's nuclear ambitions.

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The first sacrifice we must make is the idea that each of us, or any of us, can go it alone.

I want to welcome our four distinguished witnesses and, in particular, my old and very good friend, Ambassador Oded Eran.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

We will move to Mr. Pence, who serves as the ranking member on the Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee.

Mr. PENCE. I thank you, Chairman. I want to thank both the chairmen for calling this important hearing, and welcome this distinguished panel of witnesses.

Chairman Ackerman, I know you and I both returned from trips to Israel just within the last week. Everywhere I went, people told me, Gary Ackerman's coming, apparently a much bigger deal than my coming.

Mr. ACKERMAN. They are waiting for a different coming, actually.

Mr. PENCE. Everywhere I went in Israel, I saw a vibrant and flourishing modern country, one that is geographically small and almost surrounded by a sea of hostility. Given this state of the region, Israel's relations with the EU are perhaps more critical than ever.

It seems like our witnesses today are in general agreement on a couple of key issues: That cooperation and collaboration between the EU and Israel is progressing and should continue, with an eye to adding Israel to NATO, that economic interaction proceeds apace. EU is Israel's largest trading partner and its leading import source, and the EU sees, at least in theory, the threat posed by Iran.

On a less positive point, the problem with Hezbollah persists, and the EU has not taken the principled approach as it has with Hamas; that is, utterly isolating an obvious terrorist organization.

I also find Germany's huge amount of commerce with Iran troubling. Dr. Gardiner cites the study that some 5,000 German compa-

nies do business in Iran. Germany's fragile coalition government is thus reluctant to get too far out in front on that issue.

I am also struck by Dr. Lesser's point that jihadists regard Europe, Israel, and the United States as "the far enemy." We all clearly have common interests, and we face a common threat. I hope the EU doesn't discover this too late.

I am in agreement with Dr. Gardiner's emphatic statement that "the West must be prepared to use force against Iran in addition to wielding economic and political pressure" against a "fundamentally evil and barbaric regime." This view is not widely held in Europe, although it should be. Europe is ominously closer, in Iranian missile range, than the United States.

The EU's sanctions adopted last month on Iran's major bank, freezing the assets of and prohibiting transactions with Bank Melli, and the sanctions on 38 other Iranian entities and individuals are a welcome development, but since German and Russian economic interests are so deeply intertwined with Iran, it is hard to see the EU going much further than that right now.

Here I would make another plug for H. Con. Res. 352, the Ackerman-Pence resolution. It has 235 cosponsors and counting. It specifically calls for the President of the United States to impose sanctions on Iran's Central Bank and any Iranian bank engaged in proliferation activities or the support of terrorist groups, international banks that conduct transactions with outlawed Iranian banks, energy companies investing \$20 million or more in Iran's petroleum or natural gas sector, and all companies conducting business with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Let me also associate myself, as I did this morning, with Chairman Ackerman's comments that the Ackerman-Pence resolution is precisely an effort to increase economic and diplomatic pressure on Iran, and, despite some rather strange musings on the Internet, has nothing whatsoever to do with military action or a naval blockade. It is, in fact, very opposite in its intention and purpose, bringing, as we are urging this administration to do—bringing greater economic and diplomatic pressure so that such other considerations and other action would not be necessary.

I also highlight the House's efforts a year ago when we passed H. Con. Res. 21 by a vote of 411 to 2, calling on the United Nations Security Council to charge Iranian President Ahmadinejad with violating the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the United Nations Charter because of its repeated calls for the destruction of Israel. Indeed, the sad reality, as Dr. Gardiner testifies, is that Israel remains "the most persecuted nation in modern history."

The deeper problem is that NATO expansion toward or EU integration with Israel would not be controversial if the Islamic world would simply accept Israel's right to exist. Sixty years into its life, only 2 out of 22 Arab neighbors have recognized Israel. Israel's mere existence remains a stumbling block for most of its neighbors. The European Community knows better, and yet, in my judgment, gives far too much deference to this point of view. It is as if some leaders want to triangulate between terrorists and Israel, without offending either side. Given the threat posed by Iran and the forces

of jihad generally, highlighted by Dr. Bardaji, this is simply unacceptable.

Thank you again for calling this hearing, and I look forward to a stimulating discussion on strengthening the partnership between Europe and Israel and the United States of America.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pence follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MIKE PENCE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF INDIANA

Mr. Chairmen, both, thank you for calling this important hearing, and I welcome our distinguished witnesses, PhD's all.

Chairman Ackerman, I know you and I have both returned from trips to Israel in the last week. I saw a vibrant and flourishing modern country, but one that is geographically small, and almost surrounded by a sea of hostility. Given this state of the region, Israel's relations with the EU are all the more critical.

It seems like our witnesses today are in general agreement on some key issues—that cooperation and collaboration between the EU and Israel is progressing and should continue, with an eye to adding Israel to NATO; that economic interaction proceeds apace—the EU is Israel's largest trading partner, and its leading import source; and that that the EU sees, at least in theory, the threat posed by Iran.

On a less positive point, the problem of Hezbollah persists, and the EU has not taken the principled approach as it has with Hamas, that is, utterly isolating an obviously terrorist organization. I also find Germany's huge amount of commerce with Iran troubling; Dr. Gardiner cites the study that some *five thousand* German companies do business in Iran. Germany's fragile coalition government is thus reluctant to get too far out in front on this issue.

I'm struck by Dr. Lesser's point that jihadists regard Europe, Israel, and the US as "the far enemy." We all clearly have common interests, and we face a common threat. I hope the EU doesn't discover this too late. I'm in agreement with Dr. Gardiner's emphatic statement, "The West must be prepared to use force against Iran in addition to wielding economic and political pressure" against "a fundamentally evil and barbaric regime." This view is not widely held in Europe although it should be. Europe is ominously closer in Iranian missile range than we are.

The EU's sanctions adopted last month on Iran's major bank—freezing the assets of and prohibiting transactions with Bank Melli—and the sanctions on 38 other Iranian entities and individuals are a welcome development. But, since German (and Russian) economic interests are so deeply intertwined with Iran, it is hard to see the EU going much further right now. Here, I would make another plug for H. Con. Res. 352, the Ackerman-Pence resolution (with 235 cosponsors and counting). It specifically calls for the President to impose sanctions on: Iran's Central Bank and any Iranian bank engaged in proliferation activities or the support of terrorist groups; international banks that conduct transactions with outlawed Iranian banks; energy companies investing \$20 million or more in Iran's petroleum or natural gas sector; and all companies conducting business with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

In this vein, I also highlight the House's efforts one year ago, when we passed H. Con. Res. 21 by a vote of 411–2, calling on the United Nations Security Council to charge Iranian President Mahmoud Ah-ma-din-e-jad with violating the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the United Nations Charter because of his repeated calls for the destruction of Israel.

Indeed, the sad reality, as Dr. Gardiner testifies, is that Israel "remains the most persecuted nation in modern history." The deeper problem is that NATO expansion toward or EU integration with Israel would not be controversial if the Islamic world accepted Israel's right to exist. Sixty years into its life, only two (of 22) Arab neighbors have recognized Israel. Israel's mere existence remains a stumbling block to most of its neighbors. The European Community knows better and yet, gives far too much deference to this point of view. It's as if some leaders want to "triangulate" between terrorists and Israel, without offending either side. Given the threat posed by Iran and the forces of jihad generally, highlighted by Dr. Bardaji, this is simply unacceptable.

Mr. Chairmen, both, thank you for calling this hearing. I look forward to a stimulating discussion on strengthening the partnership between Europe and Israel and what steps we can take to facilitate that.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. Costa of California.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you. I, too, want to commend both chairmen for holding this hearing. I think it is important, and it is timely.

In deference to our witnesses, I will forego a statement and look forward to hearing the testimony by our esteemed group of witnesses.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Wilson of South Carolina.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Chairman Ackerman and Chairman Wexler, for holding this hearing today on European and Israeli relations. No doubt there is a lot we can learn from our allies in Europe and in the Middle East by examining their partnership.

It is clear that the United States and Europe have a vested interest in the peace and prosperity of the Middle East. This would be true were there not conflicts just in Iraq and Afghanistan, an Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or a terrorist-supporting regime in Iran. Certainly the history of the modern State of Israel and the Israeli people's long relationship with Europe and the United States make us uniquely qualified to be a proactive partner in trade and commerce, but also a friend and ally with those who stand against violence and tyranny in that part of the world.

As much as we seek peace together, we cherish the opportunities of prosperity that have come from a strong relationship between Europe and Israel. The European Union is currently Israel's largest trading partner, a distinction that is certainly mutually beneficial. With the elections of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, three leaders who have shared their strong support for Israel, we can hope that such economic relationships will continue.

As the co-chair of the Bulgaria Caucus, I am grateful that Bulgaria, a member of the EU and NATO, has been a longtime friend of the people of Israel. During the Holocaust, Bulgaria rescued more than 50,000 Jews, and actually was the only country in Europe to have a larger Jewish population after the war than before the war.

Certainly there are issues where Europe and the United States may have differences in our approach or our support for Israeli policies; however, there is so much more that we share in common, and I am confident our relationship with the European Union and Israel respectively will serve to build a greater relationship between the two.

On a personal note, I had the privilege to make my second visit to Israel last week, along with several other Members of Congress, including Congressman Mike Pence, and I see what great strides have been made in establishing security there. While there remains much to be done in regards to influence of an inflammatory regime and the actions of terrorist organizations, I am hopeful that we can find an end to the violence that has stifled that region too long.

Again I want to thank Chairman Ackerman, Chairman Wexler, and my fellow committee members for this opportunity, and I look forward to today's testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wilson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOE WILSON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Thank you, Chairman Ackerman and Chairman Wexler for holding this hearing today on European and Israeli relations. No doubt, there is a lot we can learn from our allies in Europe and in the Middle East by examining their partnership.

It is clear that the United States and Europe have a vested interest in the peace and prosperity of the Middle East. This would be true were there not current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, an Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or a terrorist-supporting regime in Iran. Certainly, the history of the modern state of Israel and the Israeli people's long relationship with Europe and the United States make us uniquely qualified to be a proactive partner in trade and commerce, but also a friend and ally with those who stand against violence and tyranny in that part of the world.

As much as we seek peace together, we cherish the opportunities of prosperity that have come from a strong relationship between Europe and Israel. The European Union is currently Israel's largest trading partner—a distinction that is certainly mutually beneficial. With the elections of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi—three leaders who have shared their strong support for Israel—we can hope that such economic relationships will continue.

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Certainly, there are issues where Europe and the United States may have differences in our approach or our support for Israeli policies. However, there is so much more that we share in common, and I am confident our relationship with the European Union and Israel respectively will serve to build a greater relationship between the two.

On a personal note, I had the privilege to make my second visit to Israel last week along with several other members of Congress and see what great strides have been made in establishing security there. While there remains much to be done in regards to the influence of an inflammatory Iranian regime and the actions of terrorist organizations, I am hopeful that we can find an end to the violence that has stifled that region for too long.

Again, I wish to thank Chairman Ackerman, Chairman Wexler, and my fellow committee members for this opportunity, and I look forward to today's testimony.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. Bilirakis from the finest of our 50 States.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. That is right. And I agree. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the time.

To our distinguished witnesses, thank you for your time. I look forward to your testimony.

As a member of the European Affairs and Middle East and Southeast Asia Subcommittees, as well as co-chair of the Hellenic Caucus, I have particular interest in this hearing. The United States has always shared warm relations with our greatest ally in the Middle East, Israel. As we reflect on Israel's 60th anniversary as a state, ensuring its existence is just as critical now as it ever was, particularly with the daily threats it faces from its hostile enemies.

It is heartening that Europe is now coming around with Sarkozy in France and Merkel in Germany and Berlusconi in Italy. Europe appears to recognize that appeasing radicals who not only threaten Israel's existence, but also commit terrorist acts in Europe and the United States is not a foreign policy that works. I am hopeful that Europe recognizes that its relationship with Israel is one that needs to be strengthened and nurtured. I am particularly interested to get your thoughts on how the Republic of Cyprus can play a pivotal role in acting as a bridge both geographically and politically to strengthen the EU's ties with Israel.

Again, I thank you for your time and look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bilirakis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GUS BILIRAKIS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA

Mr. Chairmen. Thank you for the time. To our distinguished witnesses—thank you for your time. I look forward to your testimony. As a member of both the European Affairs and Middle East and South Asia subcommittees, as well as a co-chair of the Hellenic Caucus, I have particular interest in this hearing.

The United States has always shared warm relations with our greatest ally in the Middle East-Israel. As we reflect on Israel's 60th anniversary as a state, ensuring its existence is just as critical now as it ever was, particularly with the daily existential threats it faces from its hostile enemies.

It's heartening that Europe is now coming around. With Sarkozy in France and Merkle in Germany and Berlusconi in Italy, Europe appears to recognize that appeasing radicals who not only threaten Israel's existence, but also commit terrorist acts in Europe and the U.S., is not a foreign policy that works. I am hopeful that Europe recognizes that its relationship with Israel is one that needs to be strengthened and nurtured.

I am particularly interested to get your thoughts on how the Republic of Cyprus can play a pivotal role in acting as a bridge, both geographically and politically, to strengthen the EU's ties with Israel. Again thank you for your time and I look forward to your testimony.

I yield back my time.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

At this time I would like to introduce our distinguished panel of witnesses. Our first witness is Ambassador Oded Eran, who just last week assumed the position of director of the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv. He has had a long and distinguished career in the Israeli Government and Foreign Service since 1966, after serving 4 years with the Israel Defense Forces.

Before joining the INSS, Ambassador Eran served as the Secretary-General of the World Jewish Congress Israel branch. Prior to that, from 2002 to 2007, he was Israel's Ambassador to the European Union, covering NATO as well. From 1999 to 2000, he served as the head of Israel's negotiation team with the Palestinians, and previously served as Israel's Ambassador to Jordan.

I want to thank Ambassador Eran for coming from Israel to testify at today's hearing.

Our second witness is Dr. Rafael Bardají. I hope I am saying that—thank you, that is rare—director of International Policy at the FAES Foundation in Madrid, Spain. Previously, he served as national security advisor for then Spanish Prime Minister Aznar from 2002 to 2004, and currently serves as an advisor to the former Prime Minister. Additionally, he was senior strategic advisor to the Defense Minister of Spain, and before that the director of the Strategic Studies Group. He has also consulted with NATO military commands, the Spanish Armed Forces, Spanish intelligence and defense contractors. He holds the highest decorations from the Spanish Air Force, Navy and Army, and holds a doctorate in Contemporary History, with specialization in Strategic Issues and Military Affairs from Oxford University. I want to thank Mr. Bardají for coming from Spain also to testify at today's hearing.

Our third witness is Dr. Ian Lesser, senior transatlantic fellow at The German Marshall Fund of the United States. Dr. Lesser is an expert on Turkey, the United States-Turkey-EU relations, strat-

egies toward North Africa and the Mediterranean, and transatlantic cooperation on new security and public policy changes.

Prior to joining GMF in 2006, Dr. Lesser led a project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center on the future of United States-Turkish relations. Dr. Lesser is also the president of Mediterranean Advisors, and the Luso-American Foundation in Lisbon. He was also vice-president and director of studies at the Pacific Council on International Policy, and spent over a decade at RAND, specializing in strategic studies and Mediterranean security. Dr. Lesser has also worked on Southern Europe, Turkey, and the multilateral track of the Middle East peace process for the United States Department of State from 1994 to 1995.

Our fourth witness is Dr. Nile Gardiner, director of the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom at The Heritage Foundation. Prior to joining Heritage in 2002, Dr. Gardiner was foreign policy researcher for former Prime Minister of Great Britain Margaret Thatcher, during which time he worked on her latest book, *Statecraft: Strategies for a Changing World*.

Dr. Gardiner has also advised the executive and legislative branches of the United States Government on a range of key issues, including the role of international allies in postwar Iraq, and United States-British leadership in the war on terrorism. He also served as an expert on the 2005 Gingrich-Mitchell Congressional Task Force on the United Nations.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for being here. I would ask, if you could, to, of course, make your statements as you desire, but we would respectfully ask if you could summarize them and try to keep within a relative 5 minutes. That would be fabulous.

Ambassador Eran.

STATEMENT OF H.E. ODED ERAN, PH.D., DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES (FORMER ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN)

Ambassador ERAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to open by thanking the two chairmen of the two subcommittees for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to express my views on the very important subject. And I would also like to thank the World Jewish Congress for facilitating my appearing here today.

Let me go straight to the two issues in front of us. Both NATO and the EU started a process of dealing with the Mediterranean area, including the Middle East, about the same time. Both of them moved to a second stage, beyond the comprehensive approach to all the Mediterranean States, once again at the same time, around 2003–2004, speaking about or recognizing the need to go beyond the comprehensive approach to an individual approach; that is to say, recognizing the specificities of every Mediterranean country, and accepting the principle of differentiability.

I think the time has arrived now to talk about the next stage, and that is what I call—in terms of the EU approach, as I said—to what I call membership-minus. Membership is not something that either the EU or Israel are necessarily thinking of, but the EU will have to deal with some of its neighbors, including Turkey. Mr. Chairman, my feeling is that Turkey will find it very difficult to

become a member, and therefore the EU will have to look for a different model. And the same model that will be applied to Turkey could be applied to Israel. As I said, this is not full membership, it is membership-minus, but it is something which it would be very important to Israel.

In the case of NATO, I think that the organization is now undergoing a process of rethinking, rethinking both the mandates—obviously, Afghanistan was not in their original mandate of the organization, but the fact is that you have NATO forces deployed in Afghanistan. It is also undergoing a change in terms of membership. And in this case, I suggest that the organization should look at full membership of Israel and maybe other like-minded states which are not members at this time.

There is a growing recognition in Israel of the importance of NATO, of the importance of cooperation and collaboration between the organization and Israel. We have recently submitted a list of activities in which we could cooperate. But that needs recognition in NATO that the time has arrived to speak about, as I said, a new status in the relations, a more formal one, and that is a membership.

Another statement that I would like to make in reference to the two organizations, both the EU and Israel, one as to dealing with the connection between the peace process in the Middle East, and Israeli cooperation and collaboration with the EU and Israel. If there is a link, it works the other way around that the EU has intended it to be. I think that closer relations between Israel and these two organizations will increase the level of security in the minds of the Israelis about being accepted by the international community, and will give the Israeli public opinion a greater sense of security when the time comes to take very crucial decisions about our relations with our neighbors generally speaking, and especially with our Palestinian neighbors. And therefore, those two organizations should look at it as a positive incentive rather than a stick, which is the case with some of the EU members. And I think that this new approach in terms of the linkage should certainly be reviewed in the EU, and looked at from a positive point of view.

The role of the United States, I think, is very important in the case of NATO, being a very important member. And I suggest that the U.S. could certainly help the process in NATO when dealing with the issue of membership and making the relations stronger between this organization and Israel.

Thank you very much.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you. Thank you, Ambassador Eran.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Eran follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF H.E. ODED ERAN, PH.D., DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES (FORMER ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN)

A) BACKGROUND

The EU Barcelona Process (1995) and the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue (1994) resulted from the improved situation in the Middle East after the Gulf War (1991), the Madrid Conference (1991), the Oslo Agreements (1993), and the Israel-Jordan Treaty (1994). The EU and NATO initiatives were clearly peace process-linked, especially in the case of the European Union. The failure to reach a comprehensive

agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the 1999-2000 negotiations and the outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000 strained EU-Israel relations and caused an almost total freeze of the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue activities.

In 2004 the two processes emerged from a 3-year paralysis as a result of the following:

1. The impact of the 9/11/2001 attacks and the terror incidents in London and Madrid, which emphasized the global aspect of terrorism and the struggle against it, and helped to debunk the perception that the Arab-Israeli conflict is the underlying cause of the spread of terror perpetrated by Muslim fundamentalists.
2. The recovery, at least partial, in EU-US relations following the low ebb caused by the war in Iraq.
3. The Roadmap to a Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict of 30 April 2003, and the gradually increased acceptance by Israel of the Quartet—with the EU as a key player in this group.
4. Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza.
5. The accession of 10 new members to the EU in 2004 (most of whom had by then already joined NATO). The majority of these new members maintain friendly, close relations with the US and Israel.
6. The growing understanding in NATO and the EU on the one hand, and among several neighbor states on the other hand, that while full membership is not an option for them, they need closer relations and cooperation.

B) THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY

The need to strengthen the European Union's relations with non-candidate states led in 2003-2004 to a new initiative—the European Neighborhood Policy. Though designed originally for East European states, it was soon applied to some of the South Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries. The promise was “everything but (membership in) institutions” and a guiding principle has been differentiability, i.e., tailor-made agreements based on individual states' wishes and capabilities. This is a significant deviation from the principles that guided the Barcelona Process, which treated all the non-EU participants equally.

At the end of 2004, Israel was the first to conclude the ENP agreement (officially adopted on 11 April 2005). This document is a framework listing the areas of cooperation with a “perspective of moving beyond cooperation to a significant degree of integration, including through a stake in the EU's Internal Market, and the possibility for Israel to participate progressively in key aspects of EU policies and programmes.”

The two sides listed their priorities for action as:

- Enhancing the political dialogue, especially toward resolving the Middle East conflict; strengthening the fight against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and increasing the fight against anti-Semitism and racism
- Enhancing the economic dialogue
- Environment
- People-to-people contacts

The agenda of the ENP Action Plan was rich and comprehensive and led to what can be described as a civilized dialogue, especially regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The differences between the formal EU positions on key issues have not changed, but they have been contained and expressed in a more balanced way. Evidence of the improved dialogue is the EU presence on the Gaza Strip / Egypt border that monitors the crossing at Rafah; the EU assistance to the training of the Palestinian Authority security units (EUCopps); and the enhanced European presence in UNIFIL (Lebanon), following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

Towards the end of the 3-year period covered by the ENP-Israel—EU Action Plan, the two sides agreed (5 March 2007) to establish a “Reflection Group” to consider a way to upgrade bilateral relations. At these meetings (9 October 2007 and 15 May 2008) Israel presented concrete ideas. In response to Israel's proposals for expanding Israel's involvement in EU agencies and programs, the EU agreed to deepen the cooperation in employment and social affairs and coordination of the Social Security systems. In the trade-related areas, it includes regulatory convergence towards the EU legislations (Acquis); negotiations on liberalization of trade in services; the right

of establishment and access to public procurement; intellectual and industrial property; and technical barriers to trade.

The EU agreed to enhance the development of cooperation in the fight against organized crime, terrorism, money laundering, and the protection of personal data. The EU also agreed to reach an operational agreement with Europol and Eurojust. The EU suggested convergence in regulation in the areas of civil aviation, international maritime security, and energy, and proposed the development of cooperation in e-government and e-trade.

At the recent Israel-EU Association Council meeting (16 June 2008) it was agreed to extend the Action Plan to March 2009, and to conduct intensive negotiations and produce concrete steps by the end of 2008.

The change of the political environment between Israel and the EU and the bilateral Action Plan within the ENP have certainly boosted relations and put them on a new and higher level. However, two important qualifications should be made:

1. The European Union still strongly adheres to a political linkage between progress in the Middle East peace process and progress in upgrading the bilateral relations. In the weeks preceding the Israeli-EU Council meeting of 16 June 2008, unambiguous language connecting the two issues was proposed by some member states. Other member states proposed to eliminate linkage but have managed only to soften the preliminary text, which now reads:

“The European Union is determined to develop a closer partnership with Israel. The process of developing a closer EU-Israeli partnership needs to be, and to be seen, in the context of the broad range of our common interests and objectives which notably include the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the implementation of the two-state solution. The European Union also considers the need for urgent confidence building measures taken by the parties according to the Road Map in order to improve the security of Israelis, ease the daily life of the Palestinians and to sustain the final status negotiations currently underway.”

This statement, though balanced by no less than seven references to the EU desire to upgrade relations, may be used by any member state that will oppose further upgrading, as a means of applying political/economic pressure on Israel. While recognizing the impact of a positive political environment, the EU should avoid applying an accounting approach to bilateral relations. The expanded EU role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been achieved with Israel's consent and in some cases at Israel's request at a time when the EU has moved away from its harsh public criticism of Israel.

2. The European Council of the Heads of States of the EU members in Essen, Germany, December 1994, declared: “The European Council considers that Israel, on account of its high level of economic development, should enjoy special status in its relations with the EU on the basis of reciprocity and common interest.” While the progress made hitherto in relations should not be underestimated, the Essen Declaration is still awaiting concrete translation into action. On the European side, this may require a profound change allowing some neighboring states to join European institutions. Israel, on the other hand, should show a higher level of ambition and clarity of purpose in developing relations with Europe. Because of the geographical proximity, Europe is the most natural partner in many domains beyond trade in goods and services.

ISRAEL–NATO RELATIONS

Though the Mediterranean Dialogue scored some important success and served a very useful purpose in building greater understanding and trust among the Mediterranean players, it did not fully realize the potential on the bilateral level. The 2004 Istanbul NATO Summit corrected this aspect and added the possibility of reaching an Individual Cooperation Programme between NATO and each of the 7 Mediterranean participants. Israel was the first among them to approach NATO, and indeed the ICP was concluded in October 2006. The Israeli ICP listed the areas in which both NATO and Israel have an interest in pursuing a greater degree of cooperation. High on the list are the response to terrorism; intelligence sharing; weapons of mass destruction; civil emergency preparedness; and military exercises.

In recent weeks Israel has approached NATO Headquarters with a request to enhance the cooperation in specific areas such as aerial exercises, the various working groups of CNAD (the Conference of National Armaments Directors), Research and

Development, and cooperation with the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA).

One serious impediment to Israel's participation in military exercises has been the absence of an agreement on the Status of Forces (SOFA). Most members of NATO, with the exception of the US, have agreed to reach such an agreement, which is a legal prerequisite to enabling the participation of non members and the deployment of forces for the benefit of the exercise.

The new challenges facing NATO and the fact that the organization now finds itself operating outside its geographical, Atlantic boundaries have raised the question of expanding NATO to areas that traditionally were perceived to be outside the Treaty's mandate. Several people, most notably the former Spanish Prime Minister José Maria Aznar, have suggested new members such as Japan, Australia, and Israel. Israel's capabilities in certain areas can add to those already extant in NATO, and membership in NATO could add to the process of normalizing Israel's position in the international arena. Membership in NATO and other non-UN bodies will increase the psychological comfort level of Israeli citizens when they are asked to make existential decisions in the context of the peace process with Israel's neighbors.

NATO should develop a new conceptual approach to the issue of new members outside the traditional borders with answers to similar questions that arose in the EU concerning the applicability of certain articles, programs, or activities. In NATO's case, this could pertain to Article 5. Israel, on the other hand, much like in the case of the EU, should make a strategic determination as to its desired status in NATO.

In recent years, interest in NATO has grown both in the Israeli defense establishment and among the public, and visits by the organization's high-ranking officials, including the Secretary-General, have drawn much attention. There is no doubt a desire in Israel to join the "coalition of the like-minded." These new perceptions of NATO in Israeli public opinion, coupled with the defense establishment's willingness to cooperate, share, and think in terms of interoperability with NATO, should be encouraged.

Finally, Israel's wish for stronger bilateral association with the EU and NATO does not connote a lack of interest in the unilateral initiatives of the two organizations. Israeli defense ministers have not missed any meeting with their Mediterranean partners; the same is true of high-ranking Israeli officers.

Israel wholeheartedly supports President Sarkozy's initiative to convene the heads of the Mediterranean states next week in Paris in order to strengthen the Barcelona Process that began in 1995. There are many common issues and problems facing these countries, and a common approach and effort will facilitate the solutions.

Mr. WEXLER. Dr. Bardají.

STATEMENT OF H.E. RAFAEL BARDAJÍ, PH.D., DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL POLICY, FAES FOUNDATION (NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR TO FORMER PRIME MINISTER JOSÉ MARÍA AZNAR OF THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN)

Mr. BARDAJÍ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Wexler, Chairman Ackerman, distinguished Members of the House, it is a privilege for me to be invited to make a contribution to this hearing.

Three years ago I wrote a report called NATO: An Alliance for Freedom. The ideas I defended were very simple. NATO was created to defend the West from the threats that were a mortal danger to us. Now, in order to defend our way of life, our freedom, and our institutions, NATO should be making a priority the combat against the threat posed by the global jihad.

In order to do so, some essential changes will be needed: To adopt a new strategic concept; to develop a homeland defense component; and to invite nations willing and able to make a clear political and military contribution to the collective defense, countries such as Japan, Australia, and Israel.

I have to say that some points of the report were easier to accept than others. For instance, when I started preparing it, almost ev-

everyone was dismissive of any relation between the alliance and Israel. However, as has been said already here, 4 years later NATO and Israel have signed an Individual Cooperation Program. And even more important, Israel is actively participating in NATO's mission Active Endeavour.

That has been possible thanks to many people, but I would like to make a special mention here of the work carried out by Ron Asmus of the German Marshall Fund; my friend Matt Horn, first at the Pentagon and now at the American Jewish Congress; and Professors Uzi Arad and Tommy Steiner from the Atlantic Forum of Israel, among others. I also want to express my gratitude to President Aznar, who has been promoting the ideas defended in the report before many world leaders, from DC to Canberra.

Having said that as a background, the idea I would like to defend today is also very simple. Despite all practical arrangements achieved in the last 3 years between Israel and NATO, I still believe that the most beneficial arrangement for NATO, as well as for Israel, is full membership. Less than that, neither side may enjoy all the strategic benefits of being together. I will explain myself very briefly, since I have deposited a written statement for the record.

NATO and Israel share many and very important strategic interests. The broader Middle East is where the strategic tectonic plates of our world are colliding today. The inter-German border was the central front of the Cold War for many decades. Today if there is a central front between civilization and barbarism, it runs through the Middle East. It is no longer just a cause of nationalism. What we see in the region today is a matter of freedom versus fanaticism, of respect to international norms versus rogue behaviors, of mutual coexistence versus mutual destruction. I do believe it is in the interest of the West that these forces of radical Islam are contained and undermined.

Iran is another example of strategic convergence. It is in the interests of the whole international community to put an end to Iranian nuclear ambitions, as well as to make the regime in Tehran to behave responsibly. The game the Iranian leaders have been playing is to try to create divisions between the United States and Europe, and to isolate Israel as much as possible. If presenting a cohesive front against Iran is an indispensable diplomatic tool, I cannot imagine a stronger signal to Tehran than to have Israel as a NATO ally. Thus, the strategic benefit of having Israel as a full member of NATO will be a reinforced deterrence posture both for Israel and NATO.

Secondly, all the alternatives to full membership have a clear limit to what can be achieved at the operational level. It is true that many things can be done, from intelligence sharing to joint maneuvers, but if we look at the history of NATO, we can only conclude that technical cooperation agreements are used basically to move candidates to full membership, or, alternatively, to prevent them to become so.

Limiting Israel to a program-by-program approach seems to be an undesirable option. One thing is to collaborate in programs like sensors or antisubmarine warfare, and a very different one in the

war against terror or in ballistic missile defenses. It is the difference between tactics and strategy.

There is also a third field calling for Israel full membership in NATO, the defense industrial sector. We all know an effective defense requires a competitive and modern defense industrial base. Israel has the know-how and many attractive technologies that could be integrated into NATO Europe projects if we were able to remove many of the bureaucratic obstacles that give a premium to NATO members. But in order to exploit fully this commercial/industrial relation, Israel has to share all the procedures and NATO standards. At that point, why not recognize Israel as a full member?

Finally, while NATO has been acting well beyond its original mission and geographical scope, it has also lost the clarity of its founding purpose, building a permanent arrangement for defending our values, our political system, our open markets, our freedom. NATO in the 1940s and 1950s was about preserving freedom for the West. NATO still is a democratic club 60 years later. With all imperfections we may find, it is a fact that NATO is the only forum democratic powers have to discuss strategic issues. Why not bring other democratic countries to the table, bearing in mind they are willing and able to make significant contributions to our common security across the globe? If we were to stress the democratic nature of the alliance, there is no point in keeping the distance between us and our natural allies in other regions.

So to me it is in NATO's and Israel's best interests to have Israel in NATO. It is desirable. But is it feasible? I have to admit that in today's NATO, there is no room for Israel as a full member, but at the same time, I am fully convinced that today's NATO is not sustainable for the future unless we are happy with putting the alliance aside from the central strategic issues of our time.

NATO must change dramatically if it wants to be relevant, and it is in that process of change where Israel can be fitted in. Israel can bring to NATO what the alliance is looking for: Willingness to act, capabilities, and a clear strategic vision.

There are two obstacles that are always mentioned. The first one is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its possible implication for article 5; the second, the potential negative reaction in the Arab world. I have to say that there is nothing automatic in article 5, and it would be possible to arrive at an understanding between NATO and Israel in order not to bring the Palestinian conflict as a case for collective defense. The second argument, out of fear of Arab reactions, is also manageable.

The more logical solution could be to strengthen NATO's Mediterranean dialogue, and it would be perfectly feasible to favor special status and partnerships with different Arab countries. Jordan is a case in point.

There is a final argument, critical of Israel in NATO, which I would like to address, although very briefly, before concluding my remarks. It revolves around Israeli fears that being part of an alliance will undermine their freedom of action to defend themselves. It is comprehensible, but it is an illusion. Nothing in NATO will preclude any of its members to act whenever, wherever, and in a way it believes necessary.

NATO has proved to be very flexible indeed in accommodating different ways of integration. For instance, the current French policy of bringing France back into the military command has several requirements, like that French nuclear forces always be kept under national command. The alliance has proved to be full of creativity for institutional arrangements.

Dear Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, I perfectly understand that bringing Israel into NATO is a complex issue. I tried to show that it is worth to explore for the strategic benefit of Israel and the democratic world. Three years ago we were able to initiate a debate that was really impossible before. NATO is going to celebrate its 60th anniversary in a few months. If we want NATO to succeed in the next 60 years, we should better prepare NATO for the emerging strategic environment. A new strategic concept is badly needed. A reflection on the meaning of article 5 is urgent. A clarification of allied solidarity is vital. Finding ways to incorporate nonallied powers into the decision-making machinery is required. Thinking about global partnerships is also indispensable. It is within that context that we must discuss the merits and the ways to bringing Israel closer and into NATO.

Am I aware and very happy that the American Jewish Congress is sponsoring an important project in Israel with the Atlantic Forum of Israel? I myself am launching in Madrid a new report where Israel and NATO will have a prominent place. I think it is a window of opportunity, and we should push forward. Thank you very much indeed.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bardají follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF H.E. RAFAEL BARDAJÍ, PH.D., DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL POLICY, FAES FOUNDATION (NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR TO FORMER PRIME MINISTER JOSÉ MARÍA AZNAR OF THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN)

THE CASE FOR ISRAEL FULL MEMBERSHIP INTO NATO

Chairman Wexler, Chairman Ackerman, distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Europe and the Subcommittee on The Middle East and South Asia, it is a privilege for me to have been asked to make a contribution to this hearing on "Europe and Israel: Strengthening the Partnership."

Three years ago I co-authored a report called NATO: An Alliance for freedom. I have deposited an electronic version of it just in case you may be interested in incorporating it into the records.

What I defended on it was very simple, and can be summarized as follows:

- 1.—Jihadism—or islamist terrorism—represents an existential threat to the West;
- 2.—NATO was created back in 1949 to defend the West, from the threats that may pose a mortal danger to us. In sum, to defend our way of life, our freedom and our institutions;
- 3.—NATO should be the primary tool to combat the threat posed by the global jihad;
- 4.—In order to do so, some essential changes were needed, like:
 - a) To adopt a new strategic orientation expressed in a new strategic concept, and to place the war against terror as the main priority of NATO;
 - b) To develop a homeland defense component within NATO, given the increasingly blurred frontier between internal and external security;
 - c) The need to expand NATO beyond its traditional boundaries and areas of responsibility in order to fight effectively a global threat;
 - d) Accordingly, NATO should expand its enlargement policy, and invite nations willing and able to make a clear political and military contribu-

tion to the collective defense. I'm referring to countries such as Japan, Australia and Israel.

I have to say that some points of the report were easier to accept than others. While getting a new strategic concept is a need openly discussed nowadays in NATO HQ, and the threat of terrorism was recognized to some extent in the Comprehensive Political Guidance adopted in the Riga Summit at the end of 2006, defending Israel membership in NATO has proved to be a much harder task.

When I started preparing the report *NATO: An Alliance for freedom*, almost everyone was dismissive of any relation between the Alliance and Israel. I remember many people arguing that the mere idea of bringing the two parts together was a non-starter. It could not fly.

However, four years later, today, NATO Secretary General has visited Israel officially for the first time; NATO and Israel have signed an Individual Cooperation Program (ICP); Israeli and NATO members forces have trained together in joint exercises; and, even more important, Israel is actively participating in NATO's mission Active Endeavour, being carried out since 2001 in the Mediterranean waters.

I would like to mention that to my own satisfaction I discovered in 2005 that there were some influential people also thinking in the same way as I did. Perhaps we may have disagreements on the nature and timing of NATO/Israel closer relations, but we were all defending the idea that strengthening the strategic relation between NATO and Israel was not only a sound option, but an indispensable one. I would like to make a special mention here to the work carried out by people like Ron Asmus, from The German Marshall Fund, Matt Horn, from the American Jews Congress, and Professors Uzi Arad and Tommy Steiner from the Atlantic Council of Israel, among others. I also want to express my gratitude to President José María Aznar, who has been ardently promoting the ideas defended in the report before many world leaders, from DC to Canberra, as well as for my colleagues at the Strategic Studies Group (GEES) in Madrid, as they were instrumental in developing my own thinking on the subject.

Having said all that as background of what I am going to express here today, the idea I would like to defend in front of you, distinguished members of the House, is also very simple: despite all practical arrangements achieved in the last three years between Israel and NATO, I still believe that the most beneficial arrangement, for NATO as well as for Israel, is full membership. Less than that, neither side may enjoy all the potential strategic benefits of being together.

Let me start by delineating the rationale of Israel's full membership into NATO for both sides, Israel and the Alliance.

To begin with, NATO and Israel share many and very important strategic interests. The broader Middle East is where the strategic tectonic plates of our world are colliding now. The inter-German border was the central front of the Cold War for many decades; today if there is a central front between civilization and barbarism it runs through the Middle East. It is no longer just a cause of nationalism, what we see in the region today is a matter of freedom versus fanaticism; of respect to the international norms versus rogue behaviors; of mutual coexistence versus mutual destruction.

Israel has been fighting for its own existence since its creation. But Israel's enemies today are different than in the past. Israel security is not threatened by the neighboring regimes; instead it is progressively confronted by new non-state forces, with a radical fanatic agenda, unwilling to compromise, and seeing Israel as one obstacle for their more expansive ambitions. The evolution of Hezbollah, the Party of God in Lebanon, and Hamas in Gaza, represent clearly what I'm saying.

I do believe it is in the interest of the West that these forces of radical Islam are contained and undermined.

Take Iran as another example of strategic convergence. It is in the interest of the whole international community to put an end to the Iranian nuclear ambitions, as well as to make the regime in Teheran to behave responsibly. The game the Iranian leaders have been playing is to try to create divisions between the US and Europe, among the Western nations and Russia and China, and to isolate Israel as much as possible. Actually they will love to see Israel isolated and disconnected from the West, politically and militarily.

If presenting a cohesive front against Iran is an indispensable diplomatic tool in order to thwart its nuclear program, I cannot imagine a stronger signal to Teheran than to have Israel as a NATO ally. Also, Israel in NATO could complicate too much any calculus to be made by the ayatollahs in the future vis a vis Israel. Being a part of a formal political-military alliance eliminates some of the more risky ambiguities that may drive Iran into a major strategic mistake.

I know that Israel traditional defense policy has been to rely on its own national capabilities; I also know that its best has been the US. Acting alone, or backed by the US, Israel has been able to fight and win all the conventional wars that have been forced to fight. But as I suggested before, we are now entering into a new Middle East. Adding an extra dose of deterrence can only add predictability and stability into a very volatile region.

Thus, the strategic benefit of having Israel as a full member in NATO will be a reinforced deterrence posture, both for Israel and NATO.

Secondly, all the alternatives to full membership have a clear limit to what can be achieved at the operational level. It is true that many things can be done through individual cooperation plans, from intelligence sharing to joint maneuvers. But if we look at the history of NATO, we can only conclude that technical cooperation agreements are used either to move candidates to full membership or, alternatively, to keep the country signing such kind of agreements as a second-class citizen compared to the rest of the allies. Though if we listen to the current complaints of nations whose forces are operating along NATO forces in NATO missions but they are not NATO members, it is evident that nobody wants to be second-class citizens for long.

Partnership for Peace was created intelligently to help the Central and Eastern Europeans make the transition from the Warsaw Pact to democratic westernized regimes with modern and civilian controlled armed forces. For some there was a fast track; for other, the path took longer. But if the goal to become member of NATO at some stage was removed, the PfP ceased to have any meaning and attraction at all. So, to me, this is not the path Israel should be considering (bearing in mind the fact that it has to be first a member of the OSCE).

There are so many important fields for technical cooperation that limiting Israel to a program by program approach seems to be a non desirable option either. One thing is to collaborate in programs like sensors, antisubmarine warfare, or counterterrorism detection methods; and a very different one to do it on ballistic missile defenses. It is the difference between tactics and strategy. If the threat from all kind of ballistic missile is growing; if this threat will become more acute given the WMD proliferation trends, it is quite unreasonable to think of NATO and Israel as two distinctive and disconnected bubbles. Counter proliferation and BMD will be more and more central to our security needs and fighting them will require more than mere tactical or technical agreements. Actually, having just a single security zone will be safer than the alternative to fight them separately.

Furthermore, if we talk about operations, and NATO nowadays is all about operations, not being a member is a clear disadvantage. For many years Spain contributed forces to NATO missions without being in the military command structures, so receiving orders without having a voice in shaping the operations. Paying all the price and enjoying none of the benefits of being on the top. Australia has expressed similar discomfort about its role within NATO structures and procedures in Afghanistan. The lesson here is that if one nation makes a significant contribution of the ground, it should have a voice in the command structures, military and political, no matter if it is a member state or not. I can imagine an expanded North Atlantic Council meeting, open to members of different coalitions in different missions. But couldn't be wiser to open up the club to those willing to be an active part on it?

If we agree that both Israel and NATO have many things to learn from each other, as well as many core issues where to collaborate closely, why not to exploit the full potential of the relationship?

Beyond the strategic and operational areas, there is a third field calling for Israel full membership in NATO: the defense industrial sector. We all know that an effective defense requires a competitive and modern defense industrial sector. Taking aside the US whose market is big enough to sustain open competition and innovation, the size of national markets either in Europe or in Israel are too small for producing the goods that will be required in the future without multinational collaborative projects. If you look at the recent history of weapons acquisition in Europe, you won't find major systems produced nationally.

Israel has the know-how and many attractive technologies that could be integrated in NATO Europe projects if we were able to remove many of the bureaucratic obstacles that give a premium to NATO members.

Defense industrial capabilities are also very dependent on exports to third countries. That's the case of Europe major producers as well as Israel. For Israel, the expansion of NATO means, de facto, a shrinking defense market, since any new member or partner will be inclined to buy following NATO standards, procedures, thus opening their market first to member states firms. For NATO members, joint ventures with Israeli companies could give them an edge in competing in the global market. But in order to exploit fully this commercial/industrial relation, Israel has

to share all the procedures and NATO standards. At that point, why not recognize Israel as a full member?

Finally, I see a strong political reason for making the case of Israel in NATO. While NATO has been acting well beyond its original mission and geographical scope, it has also lost the clarity of its funding purpose. Today's NATO is actively engaged in actions, because it is activity what gives NATO its meaning. We have lost track of the original goal of the Atlantic alliance: building a permanent arrangement for defending our values, our political system, our open markets, and our freedom. NATO in the 40's and 50's was about preserving freedom for the West. Despite some imperfections, NATO was essentially a democratic alliance defending itself from the totalitarianism of the USSR.

NATO still is a democratic club 60 years later. We don't need to buy the theory of a world divided between democratic and autocratic powers to recognize that fact. We don't need to argue in favor of a league of democracies, because we, NATO members, are democratic nations, expanding constantly the camp of democracies. Don't forget that democratic criteria are strictly applied to candidates during the enlargement process.

With all the imperfections we may find, it is a fact that NATO is the only forum democratic powers have to discuss strategic issues. Why not bring other democratic countries like Japan, Australia, and Israel to the table bearing in mind that they are willing and able to make significant contributions to our common security across the globe? If we were to stress the democratic nature of the Alliance, there is no point in keeping the distance between us and our natural allies in other regions of the world. A world that we must be aware is constantly shrinking in strategic terms.

Up to here why Israel in NATO is needed. But is it possible? Is it feasible?

I have to admit that in today's NATO there is not room for Israel as a full member. But at the same time, I'm fully convinced that today's NATO is not sustainable for the future unless we are happy with putting the Alliance aside from the central strategic issues of our time. NATO must change dramatically if it wants to be relevant. And it is in that process of change where Israel can be fitted in. Actually, Israel can contribute to the very process of change in the good direction. Israel can bring to NATO what the Alliance is looking for: willingness to act, capabilities, and a clear strategic vision.

There are two obstacles that are always mentioned when talking about Israel in NATO: the first one, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its possible implications for article 5 collective response; the second, the potential negative reaction in the Arab world. Though both have some merits in their arguments, I do believe they can be overcome without major problems, really.

Concerning the article 5 of the Washington Treaty, though all NATO members are required to contribute to the collective defense if one of the allies is attacked, it is worth considering that nowhere in the wording of the article there is such thing as an automatic military response. Actually, the procedure must be, first, initiated by the concerned member state; second, the rest of the allies will respond according to their national will. So it may be the case that an ally under attack will not bring the issue to NATO; and also that if he does, he will not seek—or find—necessarily a strong military backing. Two brief examples: when Morocco took by force the small Spanish islet of Perejil, in 2002, Spain considered herself able to deal with the situation, and did not rise the issue to NATO instances. Similarly, when art. 5 was for the first time activated after 9/11, the support given to the US was relatively modest in military terms.

If there is nothing automatic in article 5, it will be possible to arrive to an understanding between NATO and Israel in order not to bring the Palestinian conflict as a case for collective defense. I think the problems with the West bank could be seen as a domestic problem of Israel. And even if the Israeli government's declaration of Gaza as a hostile territory makes less clear that particular case, still an agreement to leave this problem outside NATO is viable.

The second argument out of the fear of Arab reactions is also manageable to my own view. The real problem, though, is not the entire Arab world, but the moderate and responsible Arab regimes. If bringing Israel into NATO could put them in an untenable position, weakened in front of the more radical alternatives, the case for Israel would have no merit whatsoever. But I am convinced we could find ways to avoid that while bringing Israel into NATO.

The more logical solution could be to strengthen NATO's Mediterranean dialogue. In the report *NATO: An alliance for freedom* I was bolder than that, calling for the establishment of a Partnership for Freedom in the Mediterranean. Without the need to do so, bearing in mind the little enthusiasm left today for the freedom agenda, it would be perfectly feasible to favor special status and partnerships with different

Arab countries, according to their specific needs and NATO interests. Jordan is a case in point; Algeria, another.

So, there are ways to diffuse possible negative reactions from the region. Nonetheless, it must be clear that NATO's enlargement in whatever direction may take place should not and cannot be hostage of third parties' decisions. It wasn't the case with Russia prior to the acceptance of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in 1997, and it should not be the case in the future. As a matter of principle, NATO enlargement should rely exclusively on NATO's interests and decisions.

There is a final argument, critical of Israel in NATO, which I would like to address, although very briefly, before concluding my remarks. It usually comes from Israelis themselves. It revolves around Israeli fears that being part of an alliance will undermine their freedom of action to defend themselves. I really think that argument can only be understood by the loneliness Israel has felt so many times after seeing many Europeans embracing the Palestinian cause, and falling into anti-Israelis and anti-Semitic stances. It is comprehensible, but I do believe also it is an illusion. Nothing in NATO will preclude any of its members to act whenever, wherever, and in a way it believes necessary. Actually, political criticism may be dealt with in a more benign way within NATO structures.

NATO has proved to be very flexible indeed in accommodating different ways of integration. For instance, the current French policy of bringing France back into the military command structures, has several requirements like that French nuclear forces should and will be always kept under national command, entirely outside NATO's Nuclear Planning Group. NATO is an Alliance full of creativity for institutional arrangements.

Dear chairman, distinguished members of the committee, I perfectly understand that bringing Israel into NATO is a complex issue. I just tried to show that it is worth to explore for the strategic benefit of Israel and the democratic world. Three years ago we were able to initiate a debate that was really impossible before. NATO is going to celebrate its 60th anniversary in a few months, in April 2009. If we want NATO to succeed in the next 60 years, we should better prepare NATO for the emerging strategic environment.

It is likely that the 60th anniversary summit will be more of a symbolic nature, given the fact that the new US Administration will be just a few weeks old, and other electoral process in Europe will also interfere. In any case, it could open the discussion on critical issue for the 2010 summit. A new strategic concept is badly needed; a reflection on the meaning of article 5 in the post 9/11 world is urgent; a clarification of allied solidarity is vital; finding ways to incorporate non-allied powers into the decision making machinery is required; thinking about global partnerships is also indispensable.

It is within that context that we must discuss the merits and the ways to bring Israel closer and into NATO. It is our window of opportunity. I believe it should be done, and can be done if we push for it.

Thank you very much.

Mr. WEXLER. The new rule is if you fly over an ocean to get here, you get an extra 3 minutes. But if you don't—Dr. Lesser, please.

STATEMENT OF IAN LESSER, PH.D., SENIOR TRANSATLANTIC FELLOW, THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. LESSER. Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the subcommittees, I should say, thank you very much indeed for this opportunity to be here with you to offer some thoughts about this question of Israel and its relationship with Europe and Euro-Atlantic institutions from a transatlantic perspective. Let me also stress these are my own personal views, and not solely those of GMF or others.

Let me summarize my remarks via three points, if I could: One about strategy, one about the Mediterranean dimension, and one about the implications for U.S. policy.

First, on strategy, I would stress the fact that Israeli-European relations have been enhanced in important ways over the last months and years, it is not just symbolism. It is not just the fact

that it coincides nicely with important political-level visits or the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel. This is strategic logic at work.

Some of the previous speakers have alluded to this, but I think it is quite important to underscore that the strategic environment that Israel faces and the strategic environment Europe faces are important—are shared environments. They overlap in important ways. The risks are not just transnational, but they are actually transregional, and they include certainly terrorism, the risk of extremism, and I would underscore again the risk of proliferation, and the increasing range of missiles with a trans-Mediterranean capacity. The kind of tests that we saw yesterday conducted by Iran reinforce this concern very strongly.

These are issues that Israel has faced for a long time. Europe, NATO Europe in particular, southern region of NATO, Turkey, Greece, Italy and others are very exposed to this problem. These are simply examples of shared risk. Europe is already an actor in Israel's neighborhood. In Lebanon, it is an actor in relations with Syria. It is an actor via the Quartet. It is an actor on the border crossing in Rafah. I can imagine under different circumstances looking ahead, both positive and negative, that Europe will continue to be an integral actor. And Israel and the United States, as a supporter of Israel, will have a stake in making sure that that cooperation is effective. I think that is true whether we get a positive scenario, with movement toward a settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbors, or whether we have a much more negative scenario, where the Iranian risks and other risks deepen.

Israel will need additional strategic reassurance and additional deterrence. Europe can supply some of that. It is quite possible that there will be even within the next year in the Czech Presidency after the French Presidency of the EU a full-fledged EU-Israel summit. I think this will be another important milestone that we should be supportive of.

My second point would be about the Mediterranean dimension. This Mediterranean dimension matters. This is the strategic space in which whatever is going to be done between Europe and Israel in security terms in the coming years and in economic terms is going to play out.

Europe is increasingly, I would argue, looking south. After some years of being focused on Central and Eastern Europe, for very understandable reasons, France and others are trying to reinforce the Mediterranean dimension. On July 13th, the French will inaugurate a Union for the Mediterranean in Paris. Israel will be part of that. It is an outgrowth of the Barcelona Process of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership that Israel has played an important part in for some years.

The NATO Mediterranean Dialogue has been mentioned already. I think more could be done with this. Granted it falls far short of the idea of eventual membership in NATO for Israel, but this principle of self-differentiation which has been introduced, which is to say the partners in the Med Dialogue can proceed at their own pace according to their abilities and their interests, leaves a lot more scope for Israel to cooperate with NATO.

Israel brings a lot to the table in terms of its experience, its technology, its doctrine, and its ability to discuss strategic issues.

A final point about this is that these two Mediterranean initiatives are key, and, in fact, some of the few places where Israel and its Arab neighbors actually meet multilaterally. That shouldn't be forgotten. It is significant even as we move to thinking about a more elaborate relationship between NATO and the European Union.

A third point about implications for U.S. policy. I would say there are a couple of next steps. We can do more in this regard. Some of these things are simple, but I think they need to be done. We can make our support clear as a matter of declaratory policy. I think a lot of Europeans still are somewhat suspicious that we are really serious about giving Europe a bigger role in relation to Israel, the peace process, Israel's security and so on. We can do that.

The second has to do with NATO and the refashioning, reshaping of NATO. I think here again we can be much more proactive both in pushing the Mediterranean Dialogue component further, but also in pushing this very important debate about whether Israel really can be a member of a more globalized NATO further. I think there is a lot more that we can do in that regard, and it would be in our interests.

Finally, I think that there is an important opportunity. There will be a new administration in the United States. There are new leaderships in Europe. These leaderships are now pushing the idea of a closer relationship to Israel; they are not hindering it. I think we can put this on the agenda for our most important bilateral discussions over the next year, in particular with France, and in particular if France comes back into NATO's integrated military command.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lesser follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF IAN LESSER, PH.D., SENIOR TRANSATLANTIC FELLOW, THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND OF THE UNITED STATES

The opinions expressed in this statement are the author's and do not represent the views of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, its directors or staff.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be with you today and to share some thoughts on the future of relations between Israel and Europe from a transatlantic perspective.

In the current strategic environment, European and Israeli interests are increasingly interdependent, and this reality is reflected in the changing relationship between Israel, Europe and Euro-Atlantic institutions. A closer relationship between Europe and Israel supports America's interests across multiple regions, and can be further encouraged and reinforced in the years ahead.

My testimony focuses on recent developments, notes some of the key issues affecting relations between Europe and Israel, including the Mediterranean dimension, and looks ahead to next steps for US and NATO policy.

A CLOSER AND MORE STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

The years following Israel's independence were characterized by the emergence of a close relationship between Israel and leading European states, notably France and, over time, with Germany. Affinity, proximity, and the legacy of the Holocaust drove this close relationship, reinforced by a shared geopolitical interest in the containment of Soviet power in Europe and the Middle East. From the late 1960s onward, the relationship acquired a more complex and sometimes troubled character,

interwoven with transatlantic differences over Middle East policy. The limited European support for the American re-supply of Israeli in 1973 was emblematic of an increasingly difficult pattern of relations. Over the last three decades, European public perceptions of the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, and Europe's stake in ties with Arab energy producers and Iran, have contributed to cooler relations—never amounting to strategic estrangement—but lacking a strong sense of affinity and shared security interests.

The recent improvement in European-Israeli relations has been driven by several factors. First, the economic dimension, always important, has become more central as the Israeli economy has expanded, and with the growing prominence of technology and services on a global basis. Progressively closer institutional ties between Israel and the European Union have allowed Israel more open access to the European market. Today, the EU is Israel's largest trading partner, accounting for roughly 40 percent of imports and 30 percent of the country's exports. The June 16, 2008 EU-Israel Association Council meeting endorsed a program of enhanced cooperation in the economic, technological and cultural spheres, and wider Israeli participation in EU agencies. Full Israeli integration in the European market is within reach over the next decade.

Second, Europe has changed in ways that strengthen the rationale and scope for relations. EU enlargement to central and Eastern Europe has created new opportunities for trade and investment, and perhaps more importantly, has enhanced Israel's status as a political and security partner for Europe. The first full-fledged EU-Israel summit could take place as early as the Czech presidency in 2009. To the extent that Europe looks to challenges and opportunities on its southern periphery, a wider Europe will have further reason to seek closer cooperation with key states in the EU neighborhood.

Third, the policies of key European actors now favor rather than hinder expanded cooperation. The trend toward closer ties and a more explicit strategic approach to relations has been led by the Sarkozy government in France. Italy, Germany and Britain are also active on the issue, and the European foreign policy chief, Javier Solana has been supportive of a strategic approach to relations. The 60th anniversary of the State of Israel may have provided the symbolic context for some of the recent high-profile visits and agreements on closer ties, but the confluence of political leadership and geopolitics has been the real engine of change over the past year. European public opinion is often cited as a constraint in the development of closer ties. While this factor should not be discounted, polling suggest that European "warmth" toward Israel, while lower than in the US, has not declined over the past few years.¹

Fourth, changing security concerns underscore and encourage closer ties. The security environments facing Europe and Israel have always been interdependent. In the 1970s and 1980s, Palestinian terrorist groups made Europe an important theater for their operations. Today, leading jihadist networks regard both Israel and Europe (and the US) as the "far enemy." Extremist networks on the fringes of Europe's large and diverse Muslim communities have given Europe a direct stake in the prospects for a comprehensive Palestinian and broader Arab-Israeli settlement. With Israeli agreement, Europe has become a direct participant in the security equation on Israel's borders through its leadership of peacekeeping operations in southern Lebanon. Since the Oslo accords, European mediators have quietly played an important role in Arab-Israeli negotiations—the ongoing Turkish facilitation of Syrian-Israeli talks is one example.

Over time, the WMD proliferation trends affecting Israel's security have also led to the growing exposure of European territory. Southern Europe is particularly exposed to the spread of ballistic missiles of increasing range across the Middle East, including Syrian and Iranian missiles of trans-Mediterranean range. Israeli action—or inaction—on Iran's nuclear program will have profound consequences for the strategic environment in and around Europe. Europe and Israel will have a shared stake in the development of new missile defense architectures oriented toward risks emanating from the south and the east.

¹ Measured on a 100 degree scale, European warmth toward Israel has held steady at around 40 degrees over the past four years (US "warmth" in this same period has also held fairly steady at roughly 60 degrees). These results are for ten European countries, including Turkey, where public warmth toward Israel has declined sharply. If Turkey is not included, attitudes toward Israel show a modest recent improvement. Source: German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Transatlantic Trends*, 2004–2007.

THE MEDITERRANEAN DIMENSION

EU efforts to develop a strategic approach to development and security on the periphery of the continent—the wider European neighborhood—will continue to have a southern as well as an eastern component. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (the “Barcelona Process”) was launched at a time of optimism in Arab-Israeli relations in the mid 1990s. The Barcelona Process is widely seen as troubled on both sides of the Mediterranean. But it remains one of the few frameworks for multilateral cooperation in which Israel participates alongside Arab states (NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue is another). On July 13, 2008, France will host a Mediterranean summit to launch a new “Union for the Mediterranean.” The initiative, regarded with skepticism in many quarters in Europe and the southern Mediterranean, has been incorporated within the EU’s Barcelona Process. Without question, much of the transatlantic interest in the Union for the Mediterranean flows from the “Sarkozy effect,” rather than the promise of significant policy change.

Whatever its shortcomings, the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean is significant in the context of Israeli-European relations. The initiative will provide an additional framework in which Israel will participate with Arab states of North Africa and the Levant. The focus of the Union will be collaboration on specific projects, including cooperation on energy and the environment, rather than political dialogue. Above all, the initiative signals the French commitment to keeping Mediterranean interests and strategy at the forefront of EU policymaking for the period of the French presidency and beyond—an approach that reinforces the rationale for closer ties to Israel in the years ahead. It is significant that European leaderships have been willing to press ahead with new Mediterranean projects incorporating Israel, despite resistance from Arab partners around the southern Mediterranean.

THE NATO DIMENSION

Israel will not become a member of the EU, but the prospect of Israeli membership in NATO, while very remote, cannot be dismissed as a long-term scenario given the flux in Alliance purpose and reach. The debate over a global NATO is in many ways the natural extension of a successful enlargement process, and a reflection of changes in the strategic environment. Today’s leading security challenges are not just transnational, but trans-regional, with Euro-Atlantic security ever more closely linked to developments in the Middle East.

Since its launch in 1994, Israel has been a leading (arguably *the* leading) partner in NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue, a “multi-bilateral” initiative for security cooperation between NATO and seven participating countries in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean.² Israel has been a good fit for the Dialogue in several respects. At the outset, the focal point of the initiative, and the core interest for key southern European members of NATO, was north-south cooperation in the western Mediterranean. Over time, however, the center of gravity of the Dialogue has shifted eastward, driven by more pressing security concerns in the Levant, and the willingness of partners in the eastern Mediterranean—above all Israel—to pursue closer defense ties. As the Dialogue has acquired a more operational flavor, increasingly akin to NATO’s Partnership for Peace program, Israel’s capabilities and interests have become more relevant. Dialogue activities are self funded and participants are free to engage with NATO at their own level and pace. Here, too, Israel is naturally at the forefront, and could pursue a much more active program of cooperation as political conditions allow. Beyond NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue, Israel also contributes to Operation Active Endeavor, an Alliance maritime security and counter-terrorism effort in place in the Mediterranean since 2001.

There is clearly further scope for Israeli cooperation with NATO through the Mediterranean Dialogue, especially if this initiative continues to acquire a more practical, operational flavor. The evolution of NATO security interests clearly emphasizes functional areas for cooperation, including air and missile defense, maritime surveillance, and counter-terrorism and irregular warfare—all areas where Israel has much to contribute in terms of technology, doctrine and experience. The leading obstacles to a closer relationship are political. In Europe, the barriers to closer, more operational NATO ties to Israel appear to be decreasing. On the Israeli side, the tension between the desire for unfettered freedom of action and autonomy in defense on the one hand, and the need for new forms of deterrence and strategic reassurance, on the other, will need to be resolved in a way that leaves the door open to closer cooperation. This, too, appears possible.

²Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel and Jordan are members of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue. Activities within the initiative include training, exchanges, exercises and periodic meetings at the political and expert levels.

From an American perspective, closer NATO-Israel ties will pay dividends in terms of extended deterrence, the capacity to address regional risks, and greater interoperability. Even short of membership, closer ties to Israel would move the Alliance in the direction of greater attention to security beyond Europe and engagement with a wider set of like-minded security partners. As the EU enhances its ties to Israel, there are good reasons for NATO to do the same.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US POLICY AND NEXT STEPS

Improved relations between Europe and Israel, including enhanced Israeli cooperation with the EU and NATO, are clearly supportive of American foreign policy interests across multiple regions. A more active role for Israel in the Euro-Atlantic community will contribute to addressing some of the leading challenges in the strategic environment, from rapidly evolving terrorism risks to the potential for a nuclear or “near nuclear” Iran, and possibly further nuclear proliferation across the Middle East and on Europe’s periphery. New security “geometries” for Israel can contribute to deterrence and stability in a deteriorating strategic environment. So too, closer Israeli-European ties can bolster the prospects for a durable peace under more favorable conditions—to support a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians, and to help guarantee a wider Arab-Israeli disengagement.

Over the next months and years, the US can and should do more to encourage closer Israeli ties to Europe, and deeper Israeli integration in transatlantic institutions. As next steps, the US should:

- *Take a strong declaratory position on American support for enhanced EU-Israel cooperation.* Many Europeans still assume that the US resists a larger role for Europe in the Middle East, including the question of Israeli security. The US should make clear that this is a transatlantic priority. A better climate in transatlantic relations will make it easier for the US to make this case with European leaderships and publics.
- *Adopt a pro-active policy on the issue of enhanced cooperation with Israel within NATO.* The US has rarely been in the forefront of the Mediterranean Dialogue, where southern European members have generally taken the lead. The potential for more operational engagement with Israel provides a further rationale for American initiative in this area. With greater US leadership (and with the prospective return of France to the NATO integrated command structure), there will also be new opportunities for NATO-Israel ties beyond the limitations of the Mediterranean Dialogue.
- *Closer ties to Israel should be on the agenda for bilateral discussions with key leaderships in Europe, and incorporated in the broader debate over transatlantic security and a revised strategic concept for NATO.* France will likely be the center of gravity in this regard, but important opportunities will exist elsewhere beyond the French EU presidency. The US cannot expect to play a formal role in new European initiatives in the Mediterranean, but we should make clear our interest in harmonizing our regional security and development policies for the region, including those relevant to Israel.

Mr. WEXLER. Dr. Gardiner.

STATEMENT OF NILE GARDINER, PH.D., DIRECTOR OF THE MARGARET THATCHER CENTER FOR FREEDOM, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Mr. GARDINER. Mr. Chairman and distinguished members, thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee.

It is fitting that today’s hearing is taking place just weeks after Israel celebrated the 60th anniversary of its founding, and on the same day that Iran’s Revolutionary Guards test-fired nine missiles capable of reaching Tel Aviv, a stark reminder of how the stakes are being dramatically raised. The tiny nation of Israel, with just 7 million people, has fought seven wars in its brief history and survived in the face of international hostility and massive intimidation, a tribute to the strength of the human spirit and the willingness of the Israelis to fight to defend their freedom. Few countries in modern times could claim the title warrior nation. The United

States and Great Britain certainly can, and Israel definitely qualifies for this distinction, too.

Six decades on from its establishment, Israel continues to fight for its very existence and remains the most persecuted nation of modern times. The next few years will be a critical time for Israel, as it faces the prospect of the rise of a nuclear-armed Iran that has pledged its destruction.

If Israel is to survive another 60 years, it is imperative that Israel, the United States, Great Britain, and Europe confront the gathering storm and stand up to the biggest state-based threat to international security since the end of the Cold War. The West must be prepared to use force against Iran, in addition to wielding economic and political pressure.

By questioning the reality of the Holocaust, threatening to wipe Israel off the face of the map, and calling for the Jewish State to be relocated thousands of miles away, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has made clear his intentions. Too often in the 20th century world, leaders ignored statements such as these, only to watch in horror as barbaric actions followed earlier threatening rhetoric dismissed at the time as the words of a madman. If we are to learn the lessons of history, we must take the Iranian leadership at its word. As Israeli President Shimon Peres warned earlier this year, a nuclear-armed Iran will be a nightmare for the world.

There are distinct echoes on the heated discussions in Europe and the United States over the intentions of Adolf Hitler in the mid to late 1930s in today's debates over Iran. Then, as now, there was a constant barrage of calls from political elites on both sides of the Atlantic for direct talks with a totalitarian regime and illusory hopes of reaching out to moderates within the government, a general downplaying of the threat level, widespread inaction and hand-wringing, and staggering complacency over levels of defense spending. The brutal lessons of the last 100 years taught that there can be no negotiation with this sort of brutal dictatorship, and it would be a huge strategic error for the West to do so.

There will be endless debates in international policy circles over Tehran's nuclear intentions, but the essential fact remains that the free world is faced with a fundamentally evil and barbaric regime with a track record of backing international terrorism, repressing its own people, issuing genocidal threats against its neighbors, and of aiding and abetting the killing of allied forces in Iraq. As the world's largest sponsor of international terror, and a dangerous rogue regime hell-bent on acquiring nuclear weapons capability, Iran must be stopped. Every effort must be made to increase the pressure on Tehran through the Security Council and European economic, military, and political sanctions.

Important progress has been made in recent weeks in strengthening European Union sanctions against Iran. In June, all 27 EU member states agreed to freeze the assets of Iran's biggest state-owned bank, as well as impose visa restrictions on a number of prominent Iranian nuclear and military officials, including the Defense Minister and the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization.

Far more, though, needs to be done, both at the EU and member state level. Washington must push for Europe to support a policy of interdiction to halt the export or import of sensitive technology

or materials; a complete investment freeze, including a ban on investment in Iranian liquefied natural gas operations; support for democratic movements inside Iran; and the possible use of military force. The torturous EU-3 negotiations with Tehran, which have already dragged on for several years, have thus far been nearly all carrot and no stick, and have proved spectacularly unsuccessful.

Major European players such as Germany hold critically important keys to increasing the economic pressure on the Iranian regime. Iran has in recent years derived roughly 35 percent of its total imports from the European Union, and European exports to Iran are worth over 12 billion euros a year. Germany is Iran's biggest European trading partner, with exports worth 3.6 billion euros in 2007, backed by 500 million euros of export guarantees, and possesses extraordinary leverage over Iran if it chose to wield it. At present, Germany remains the weakest link in the West's confrontation with Tehran. Despite the huge economic clout that Berlin wields, Chancellor Merkel's grant coalition has appeared weak-kneed and indecisive, largely due to opposition to tougher measures from the government's Socialist wing. The European Union's policy of constructive engagement, championed by the Merkel administration and that of her predecessor Gerhard Schröder, has been a huge failure, which has simply emboldened the Iranian regime.

Throughout its history, the EU has rarely encountered a dictatorship it has refused to enter into dialogue with, and Iran has been no exception. As tensions with Iran escalate, and as the stakes are dramatically raised, the United States should support the admission of Israel into NATO, which would offer a collective security guarantee in the face of Tehran's saber rattling.

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has been searching for a continued role in the world following its highly successful period deterring the Soviet Union. If NATO is to remain relevant, it must continue to adapt to new threats on the international stage, while retaining its timeless commitment to Western security and values.

Israel, which spends nearly 8 percent of its GDP on defense, in contrast to the NATO average of 1.74 percent, excluding the United States, would be a major net asset to the alliance, possessing a first-rate army, air force, and navy, as well as outstanding intelligence and Special Forces capability. There is likely to be strong initial opposition to the move by some European countries, including France and Belgium, but it is a debate that NATO should have sooner rather than later.

In conclusion, the admission of Israel into NATO should be an important foreign policy goal for the United States. Israel is a vital American ally and friend, and membership in the alliance would be in America's and Israel's interests. The United States, NATO, and key European allies must work together to defend Israel in the face of growing intimidation from Iran and an array of international terrorist movements. The consequences of a failure to deal with the Iranian threat are immense: A nuclear-armed rogue state ruled by fanatical Islamist extremists that would have no qualms about using its power to dominate the Middle East or to arm a wide array of proxy international terrorist groups. It is a vision of the future that cannot be allowed to pass, and the European Union as

well as major European powers should reject negotiation in favor of an assertive policy of zero tolerance for Iran's nuclear ambitions.

This is a time for tough resolve from European leaders, and not a moment to project weakness and indifference in the face of a brutal terrorist regime. The West must reject the illusory promise of peace in our time conjured by advocates of an appeasement approach on both sides of the Atlantic toward the mullahs of Iran. The freedom that Israel currently enjoys was secured through the sacrifice of her soldiers through several wars in the Middle East, as well as the earlier sacrifice of American and British troops in World War II. It is the same liberty that we cherish today in the West, freedom that must be fought for and defended.

Thank you.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gardiner follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NILE GARDINER, PH.D., DIRECTOR OF THE MARGARET THATCHER CENTER FOR FREEDOM, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

The views I express in this testimony are my own, and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

It is fitting that today's hearing is taking place just weeks after Israel celebrated the 60th anniversary of its founding. This tiny nation of just 7 million has fought seven wars in its brief history and survived in the face of insurmountable odds, international hostility and massive intimidation, a tribute to the strength of the human spirit and the willingness of Israelis to fight to defend their freedom. Few countries in modern times could claim the title "warrior nation." The United States and Great Britain definitely can, and Israel certainly qualifies for this distinction too.

Six decades on from its establishment however, Israel continues to fight for its very existence, and remains the most persecuted nation in modern history. The next few years will be a critical time for Israel, as it faces the prospect of the rise of a nuclear Iran that has pledged its destruction. If Israel is to survive another 60 years it is imperative that Israel, the United States, Great Britain and Europe confront the gathering storm and stand up to the biggest state-based threat to international security since the end of the Cold War. The West must be prepared to use force against Iran in addition to wielding economic and political pressure.

By questioning the reality of the Holocaust, threatening to wipe Israel off the face of the map, and calling for the Jewish state to be relocated thousands of miles away, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has made clear his intentions. Too often in the Twentieth Century, world leaders ignored statements such as these, only to watch in horror as barbaric actions followed earlier threatening rhetoric dismissed at the time as the words of a madman. If we are to learn the lessons of history, we must take the Iranian leadership at its word. As Israeli President Shimon Peres warned earlier this year, "a nuclear armed Iran will be a nightmare for the world."

THE IRANIAN THREAT

There are distinct echoes of the heated discussions in Europe and the United States over the intentions of Adolf Hitler in the mid to late 1930s in today's debate over Iran. Then as now, there was a constant barrage of calls from political elites on both sides of the Atlantic for direct talks with a totalitarian regime and illusory hopes of reaching out to "moderates" within the government, a general downplaying of the threat level, widespread inaction and hand-wringing, and staggering complacency over levels of defense spending.

The brutal lessons of the last hundred years taught that there can be no negotiation with this sort of brutal dictatorship, and it would be a huge strategic error for the West to do so. There will be endless debate in international policy circles over Tehran's nuclear intentions, but the essential fact remains that the free world is faced with a fundamentally evil and barbaric regime with a track record of backing international terrorism, repressing its own people, issuing genocidal threats against its neighbors, and of aiding and abetting the killing of Allied forces in Iraq.

As the world's largest sponsor of international terror, and a dangerous rogue regime hell-bent on acquiring nuclear weapons capability, Iran must be stopped. The latest Israeli intelligence assessments indicate that Iran could have a nuclear weap-

on as early as mid-2009.¹ This is several years ahead of the flawed consensus assessment of the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE)², and gives added urgency to the debate over the Iranian nuclear issue.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND IRAN

Every effort must be made to increase the pressure on Tehran through the Security Council and European economic, military and political sanctions. Important progress has been made in recent weeks in strengthening European Union sanctions against Iran. In June, all 27 EU member states agreed to freeze the assets of Iran's biggest state-owned bank, Melli Bank³ as well as impose visa restrictions on a number of prominent Iranian nuclear and military officials, including Defence Minister Mostafa Mohammed Najjar and Gholamreza Aghazadeh, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization.⁴

Far more though needs to be done, both at the EU and member state level. Washington must push for Europe to support a policy of interdiction to halt the export or import of sensitive technology or materials, a complete investment freeze including a ban on investment in Iranian liquefied natural gas operations⁵, support for democratic movements inside Iran, and the possible use of military force as a last resort. The tortuous EU-3 negotiations with Tehran (led by France, Germany and Britain), which have already dragged on for several years, have thus far been nearly all carrot and no stick and have proved spectacularly unsuccessful.

Major European players such as Germany hold critically important keys to increasing the economic pressure on the Iranian regime. Iran has in recent years derived roughly 35 percent of its total imports from the European Union, and European exports to Iran are worth over 12 billion euros a year.⁶ Germany is Iran's biggest European trading partner, with exports worth 3.6 billion euros in 2007 backed by 500 million euros of export guarantees⁷, and possesses extraordinary leverage over Iran if it chose to wield it.

According to a 2007 report by the Realité EU think tank⁸, which compiled information from several sources including the German-Iranian Chamber of Commerce in Tehran, a staggering five thousand German companies do business with Iran, including heavyweights such as Siemens and BASF. Two thirds of Iranian industry relies on German engineering products, and the German Engineering Federation (VDMA) boasted of German machine construction exports to Iran worth 1.5 billion euros in 2005, with an increase in 2006. The Federal Government insures around 65 percent of exports to Iran (second only to China).

At present Germany remains the weakest link in the West's confrontation with Tehran. Despite the huge economic clout that Berlin wields with Iran, the Merkel administration has not been at the forefront of international efforts to force the Iranian regime to give in to international pressure. In contrast to French President Nicolas Sarkozy's emphatic denunciations of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's highly provocative statements, Angela Merkel's grand coalition has appeared weak-kneed and indecisive, largely due to opposition to tougher measures from the government's socialist wing.

Berlin has played a central role in European Union negotiations with Tehran, including a meeting in late 2007 between Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Iranian nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili in Hamburg, as well as a three-day visit to Berlin in April 2008 by Iranian Vice Foreign Minister S.E. Mehdi Safari.⁹ Such negotiations however have proven to be fruitless, and have simply encouraged

¹Yaakov Katz and Herb Keinon, "Israel: Iran Could Have Nukes by '09," *The Jerusalem Post*, May 6, 2008, at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1209627027461&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

²For in-depth analysis of the NIE, see James Phillips, "Don't Be Misled by NIE on Iran's Nuclear Efforts," Heritage Foundation WebMemo No. 1727, December 7, 2007, at http://www.heritage.org/Research/Iran/upload/wm_1727.pdf

³David Blair, "Iranian Bank Assets Frozen by EU Sanctions," *Daily Telegraph*, June 16, 2008, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2139863/Iranian-bank-assets-frozen-by-EU-sanctions.html>

⁴Damien McElroy, "Iran Criticizes European Union Sanctions," *Daily Telegraph*, June 24, 2008.

⁵Extensive pressure must be applied on Switzerland for example to halt a \$30 billion contract between Zurich-based contractor EGL and the National Iranian Gas Export Company.

⁶"Europe and the Mullahs: How the EU Subsidizes Trade with Iran," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 20, 2007, at <http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110009689>

⁷Matthias Kuntzel, "The Tehran-Berlin Axis," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 15, 2008 at <http://www.matthiaskuntzel.de/contents/the-tehran-berlin-axis>

⁸"Germany's Economic Ties to Iran," *Realité EU*, September 17, 2007, at <http://www.realite-eu.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=9dJBLLNkGiF&b=2315291&ct=4420179>

⁹Kuntzel, "The Tehran-Berlin Axis"

Tehran to increase their own demands while continuing its nuclear build-up. The European Union's policy of "constructive engagement" towards Iran, championed by the Merkel administration and that of her predecessor Gerhard Schröder, has been a huge failure which has simply emboldened the regime. Throughout its history, the EU has rarely encountered a dictatorship it has refused to enter into dialogue with, and Iran has been no exception.

Tehran's strategy will be to seek to divide the West's approach to its nuclear ambitions, weakening the likelihood of sustained international sanctions outside of the United Nations. Iran's rulers know that they can rely on both Russia and China to weaken sanctions at the Security Council, and are hoping that internal divisions within Europe will hamper the prospect of Europe-wide measures being imposed. It is a classic "divide and rule" approach that they are banking upon, and it is important that Berlin and other European governments do not fall into this trap.

THE EU AND MIDDLE EAST TERRORISM

The European Union as well as individual European nations must also be prepared to toughen their position with regard to terrorist organizations operating in the Middle East and which pose a direct threat to Israel as well as the West. Although the EU has placed Hamas on its proscribed list of terrorist groups, it has so far refused to include Hezbollah, the Iranian and Syrian backed Lebanese-based movement responsible for more American deaths than any terror group with the exception of al-Qaeda.

The regime in Tehran gives \$100 million to \$200 million a year in support of Hezbollah, providing rockets, arms, mines, explosives, and anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles. Hezbollah has cooperated closely with Hamas, the al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and al-Qaeda in striking against Israeli targets. Washington must apply significant pressure on Paris, Madrid and Brussels, three outposts of European opposition to anti-Hezbollah measures in the EU. As James Phillips, Heritage Foundation Research Fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs has written¹⁰,

"Classifying Hezbollah as a terrorist organization would significantly constrain its ability to operate in Europe and severely erode its ability to raise funds there and use European banks to transfer funds around the globe. All EU member states would be required to freeze Hezbollah assets and prohibit Hezbollah-related financial transactions. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah recognized the damage that this would do to his organization in a March 2005 interview aired on Hezbollah's al-Manar television network: 'The sources of [our] funding will dry up and the sources of moral, political, and material support will be destroyed.'"

Pressure should also be applied to ensure that European taxpayers' money does not support extremists in the Palestinian territories. The European Commission provides roughly 440 million euros a year (\$650 million) in aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA)¹¹, and is the world's largest single donor. Combined with contributions from EU member states, Europe currently gives the PA around one billion euros a year. Between the creation of the Palestinian Authority in 1993 under the Oslo Peace Accords and 2005, the European Union provided 2.3 billion euros in funding.¹²

A new study by the London-based think tank Taxpayers Alliance¹³ has exposed how EU funds are subsidizing Islamist-inspired violence and anti-Israeli and anti-Western propaganda in the Palestinian territories. This is done through direct financial support for the Palestinian Authority and funding for the Palestinian education system, which produces textbooks "that promote martyrdom, support the execution of apostates and support insurgents fighting British troops in Iraq." There are also major concerns over EU funding of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs)

¹⁰ James Phillips, "Hezbollah's Terrorist Threat to the European Union," Heritage Lecture No. 1038, June 20, 2007, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/hl1038.cfm>

¹¹ "Commission Co-chairs Palestinian Donors Conference and Announces €440 Million To the Palestinians for 2008," European Commission Press Release, December 17, 2007, at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1938&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

¹² Gerald M. Steinberg, "Europe's Hidden Hand: EU Funding for Political NGOs in the Arab-Israeli Conflict," NGO Monitor, April 2008, at http://www.ngo-monitor.org/data/images/File/NGO_Monitor_EU_Funding_Europes_Hidden_Hand.pdf

¹³ "Funding Hate Education: How British Taxpayers Are Funding Hate Education and Violence in the Middle East," Taxpayers' Alliance, January 2008, at http://tpa.typepad.com/home/files/funding_hate_proof6_cors.pdf

operating in the Palestinian territories without proper accountability and transparency.¹⁴

ISRAELI MEMBERSHIP OF NATO

As tensions with Iran escalate, and as the stakes are dramatically raised, the United States should support the admission of Israel into NATO¹⁵, which would offer a collective security guarantee in the face of Tehran's saber-rattling. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has been searching for a continued role in the world, following its highly successful period deterring the Soviet Union. If NATO is to remain relevant, it must continue to adapt to new threats on the international stage, while retaining its timeless commitment to Western security and values.

Israel, which spends nearly 8 percent of its GDP on defense (in contrast to the NATO average of 1.74 percent excluding the United States), would be a major net asset to the Alliance, possessing a first rate army, air force and navy, as well as outstanding intelligence and special forces capability. There is likely to be strong initial opposition to the move by some European countries, including France and Belgium, but it is a debate that NATO should have sooner rather than later.

Israel meets NATO qualifications in terms of being a democracy, having a free market economy, and being able to contribute to the common defense. In fact, unlike many new NATO members, it is a net addition to the alliance, with a military capable of all aspects of war fighting, lift and logistics ability, and a second-to-none officer corps. Israel has active armed forces numbering 133,000 men and women, with 380,000 in reserve. It possesses up to 200 warheads capable of nuclear delivery, as well as a well-equipped Air Force and Navy.¹⁶ There is little doubt that Israel's intelligence capabilities have also been a vital asset in prosecuting the global war against Islamist terrorism.

ISRAEL AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The past month has seen some positive developments in the arena of EU-Israeli relations. In a move heavily criticized by Palestinian and Egyptian leaders, Brussels significantly upgraded its relationship with Tel Aviv during the annual EU-Israel Association Council meeting, a reflection of improving ties since the departure from the world stage of Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder. Formal ties will be strengthened in three areas: diplomatic and political cooperation; a joint working group to explore Israeli entry into the European single market; and Israeli participation in some European agencies and programs.

Although full EU membership is unlikely to be on the table in the immediate future, it is conceivable that Israel may seek membership of the European Union within the next decade. Like Turkey, a leading candidate for membership of the EU, Israel is already closely tied to Europe in economic, sporting and cultural terms. Israel is for example part of UEFA, the governing body of European football, and its teams play in the European Champions League and UEFA Cup.

There are though significant hurdles on both sides. An Israeli application to join the EU would undoubtedly attract intense opposition from some Western European members with a track record of strong antipathy toward Israeli foreign policy, such as Belgium, and would spark a major debate across Europe. It would be a far more contentious issue than the recent accession of Eastern and Central European countries, and Israel would have to face down considerable hostility from officials in the European Commission and the European Parliament as well as widespread anti-Semitism that still rears its ugly head in parts of Europe.

For Israel a chief concern regarding EU membership would be a potential loss of national sovereignty. There would naturally be strong opposition in Tel Aviv towards the centralization of political and military power in Brussels, in the shape of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), both major constraints on Israel's freedom to operate independently.

Israeli membership of the EU itself could only work if Europe moves away from "ever closer union" towards a more flexible, decentralized grouping of nation states, centered on the principle of free markets and the free movement of goods and serv-

¹⁴Steinberg, "Europe's Hidden Hand: EU Funding for Political NGOs in the Arab-Israeli Conflict."

¹⁵The Heritage Foundation first advocated Israeli membership of NATO in John Hulsman Ph.D. and Nile Gardiner Ph.D., "Confounding the Mullahs of Iran: It's Time for Israel to Join NATO," Heritage WebMemo #966, January 24, 2006, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/wm966.cfm>

¹⁶*The Military Balance 2008* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008).

ices. The Irish rejection of the Treaty of Lisbon in last month's referendum struck a huge blow against the creation of a European superstate, and there are hopes that this seminal event will pave the way for a European Union that actually respects the principle of national sovereignty.

There are however no guarantees that Europe's political elites will listen to public opinion and change course—after all, democracy is usually the last thing on the minds of EU bureaucrats. A safer alternative for Israel would be membership of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), with all the benefits of the European single market but less of the political baggage of the EU.

CONCLUSION

The admission of Israel to NATO should be an important foreign policy goal for the United States. Israel is a vital American ally and friend, and membership of the alliance would be in America's and Israel's interest.

The United States, NATO and key European allies must work together to defend Israel in the face of growing intimidation from Iran and an array of international terrorist movements. The consequences of a failure to deal with the Iranian threat are immense: a nuclear-armed rogue state ruled by fanatical Islamist extremists that will have no qualms about using its power to dominate the Middle East or to arm a wide array of proxy international terrorist groups. It is a vision of the future that cannot be allowed to pass, and the European Union as well as major European powers should reject negotiation in favour of an assertive policy of zero tolerance for Iran's nuclear ambitions. This is a time for tough resolve from European leaders, and not a moment to project weakness and indifference in the face of a brutal terrorist regime.

The West must reject the illusory promise of "peace in our time" conjured by advocates of an appeasement approach on both sides of the Atlantic towards the Mullahs of Iran, and ensure the world does not face a totalitarian Islamist regime armed with nuclear weapons. The freedom that Israel currently enjoys was secured through the sacrifice of her soldiers through several wars in the Middle East, as well as the earlier sacrifice of American and British troops in World War Two. It is the same liberty that we cherish today in the West, freedom that must be fought for and defended.

Mr. WEXLER. Before we go to any questions, I just want to give Mr. Gallegly an opportunity to make an opening statement if he wishes, as the ranking member of the Europe Subcommittee.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank both you and Chairman Ackerman for calling this hearing today.

In the interests of time, so that we can get to questions, I would just ask unanimous consent that my opening statement be made a part of the record of the hearing, and we can continue the hearing.

Mr. WEXLER. So moved. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gallegly follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ELTON GALLEGLY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

I would like to start by thanking both Chairman Wexler and Chairman Ackerman for holding this hearing on the relationship between Europe and Israel and how this relationship will impact our policies with respect to the Middle East.

Over the past several days, I have carefully read the testimony of our distinguished witnesses. Although the panelists have differing viewpoints on the closeness of the relationship, they all agree that stronger Israel—Europe ties not only benefit Israel and Europe, but also serve the national interests of the United States in the Middle East.

Just in the past several years, Europe and Israel have strengthened their economic, political and military cooperation, including much deeper ties between Israel and NATO. This has already led to important intelligence cooperation between NATO and Israeli forces in the area of counterterrorism and the prevention the weapons smuggling in the Mediterranean.

After the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2003 and London in 2005, which combined claimed over 240 lives, as well as the major terrorist attacks that have been foiled in Germany, at Heathrow Airport and elsewhere in Europe, I believe that Euro-

peans understand that their safety is directly linked in working with Israel and the U.S. to defeat radical Islamic terrorist groups.

Despite this cooperation, not all is well in the Israel—Europe relationship. The major countries of Europe and Israel differ on how best to deal with Iran's attempt to acquire a nuclear weapons capability.

In addition, European Union has refused to place Hezbollah on its list of terrorist organizations. This puts the EU at odds not only with Israel and the U.S., but also with some of its own members, such as Britain and the Netherlands, which have placed Hezbollah on their own terrorist lists. I have worked closely with Congressman Wexler on this issue and I continue to urge the EU to add Hezbollah, which by any standard is one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations in the world, to its terrorist list.

While we can be critical of the EU's position on Hezbollah or the unwillingness to apply real pressure on Tehran, it is also important to recognize the positive role played by individual European countries.

For example, Cyprus should be commended for providing humanitarian aid to 15,000 American citizens who were evacuated from Lebanon during the conflict in the summer of 2006. Italy is playing an important role in maintaining peace by commanding the EU force at the Rafah border post on the Gaza—Egyptian border and the UNIFIL force in southern Lebanon. And European leaders such as President Sarkozy, Chancellor Merkel, and Prime Minister Berlusconi have all sought to improve their country's relationship with Israel.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for holding this timely hearing and I look forward to listening to our experts.

Mr. WEXLER. Let me begin by just offering two questions, if I could. I'll start with Ambassador Eran, and then ask others if they wish to respond.

With respect to enhancing NATO-Israeli relations, how best should we proceed with respect to the issue of collective security guarantees? What can we do so as to minimize the concerns that bringing Israel into the NATO Alliance will, in effect, be bringing into the alliance, as was stated earlier, the Israeli-Palestinian issue and broader concerns?

And also if we could, one issue I don't think we have touched upon, we obviously, I think most people would agree, all of you have in essence, that we have an all-star lineup of European leaders. It is a unique moment in history with respect to the individual characters, as well as the collective nature of their philosophy in Germany and Britain and France and Italy, in Eastern Europe and Central Europe. To best take advantage of this opportunity, how do we square what is an incredibly optimistic view of governmental leaders in Europe, but at the same time public policy in Europe that is strikingly negative with respect to Israel? And how do we minimize the concern that a negative public view at some point infects governmental policy? Please.

Ambassador ERAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will start with your second question.

Indeed, there is a very favorable constellation in terms of the leadership in Europe, the new leadership in Europe. And I think that soon after the elections here in the United States, it would be a very important and positive development if they could—the transatlantic leadership could have a dialogue on the issues that confront all of us in terms of how we deal with terror, how we deal with fundamentalism, and indeed with other issues. And in these terms, if the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean can reach an understanding on what do we do with the expansion of NATO, what is the new mandate of NATO, geographical and otherwise, that could

be a very important step toward a discussion of new members outside the Atlantic, the transatlantic region.

There has been a shift in the European public opinion toward Israel. I am not so sure that you will find it in the polls, but I think that the terror incidents in Madrid, London, some of the riots across European cities, that has brought to the European public—traditional European public opinion the reality that maybe Israel is facing—or they are facing the same problems that Israel is facing. And I think that there is a growing understanding to these perils that both Europeans and Israel are facing.

Secondly, how to minimize this suspicion that Israel's membership in NATO will introduce the whole Middle East conflict into the agenda of NATO. I think there are various technical ways of doing it, political and technical ways, and Professor Bardají has already referred to some of them. One way of dealing with it will be an understanding, could be even a regional understanding, that article 5 of the treaty does not necessarily apply in all cases or situations, and that is something which both sides can agree upon. And I am not so sure that NATO would want Israel to participate in the activities in Afghanistan. I am not so sure that Israel would be—even if invited, willing to send Israeli citizens to be involved in Afghanistan. Obviously, there is an added risk beyond what the risk is to NATO citizens themselves. And so there are ways of dealing with this issue of removing this issue from NATO's agenda.

By the way, there is a discussion in the NATO corridors about the possibility of NATO being involved in the Middle East conflict by deploying NATO units in the case of an agreement between us and our neighbors, and an agreement that this is what the two sides desire. So obviously there is not some sort of a reluctance in NATO of being involved in some aspects of the conflict in the Middle East. At any rate, I think that this issue can very easily be handled by both sides, that is to say NATO and Israel.

Thank you.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you. Dr. Lesser, I don't want to monopolize the time, so if you can be somewhat brief.

Mr. LESSER. Well, absolutely. Just on these two questions again, I think the question you raised is extremely important, Mr. Chairman, on the Article 5 problem. I think it is not a question of Israel becoming a member of NATO as it looks today. I think that is just simply not going to fly politically in Europe.

The question is, is NATO going to change in ways where Israel will be an easier fit and will it be an effective fit for Israel as well? And I think that is possible. I think inevitably a wider NATO or more globalized NATO is going to have more security guarantees. So I think that problem, if it doesn't go away, gets easier.

On the second point about European public opinion, let me just mention—and I mention this in my statement—German Marshall Fund and Transatlantic Trend actually polled European opinion in 10 countries. More actually; 12, over the last 4 to 5 years on exactly this question of degree of warmth toward different countries, including Israel. And what you see, in fact, is not a deterioration, but a modest improvement over time. Especially if you take Turkey out of the picture. We did polling there as well. There has been a sharp decline in Turkey.

If you take Turkey out and just look at the Europe 10, it is flat or slightly improving. It is true it is lower than it is here, but I am not sure it would be a constraint.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you. Chairman—go ahead, please Dr. Gardiner.

Mr. GARDINER. Could I just add a few points about your second question with regard to the all star line up of European leaders. I think that in the case of Sarkozy and Merkel we have seen significant improvement in the messaging coming out of Paris and Berlin. We certainly have seen overall better relations emerging between Israel and France and Germany.

However, I don't think we have seen a significant shift in terms of French or German policy. For example, the French are strongly resisting adding Hezbollah to the European Union's lists of terrorist organizations. And France still maintains a willingness to speak with some of those odious terrorist groups on the face of the earth. So I don't think we should read too much into the change of government in France on this particular question. And as I mentioned in my testimony earlier, I think the Germans have been particularly awful actually with regard to the Iranian question. And in fact, the Germans are helping to sustain the Iranian economy. And so I think a great deal of additional pressure needs to be applied on both France and Germany from the United States and the United Kingdom.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you. Chairman Ackerman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Chairman Wexler.

It occurs to me, as I know it has to you as well, Mr. Chairman, that there are some unfortunate few who would brand those who have a legitimate criticism sometimes of Israel's policy to brand those people as anti-Semitic. And at the same time, it is very, very unfair when we have those who react to the acts of terrorists and terrorism with an overreaching reaction of being anti Islamic or participating in Islamophobia.

Also I would note that there has been, I think, a great improvement in the wrong direction within Europe for some time that was anti-Semitic and anti Israel in nature. And I think since some of the attacks on European capitals and places, that that has been reduced. And I don't know if it is because of sympathy toward some other country or place that has been attacked or a greater understanding or just an Islamophobic reaction.

What I would like to know from these four very distinguished Ph.D.s—very rarely do we have four Ph.D.s all distinguished before us. What their feeling is on national policies toward other countries and places based on populations and trends of feeling among the populace. Within many countries in Europe, I would suspect hard to detect in polls, because people don't say these things to pollsters, that Turkey would have a very hard time getting into the EU for all the obvious reasons on a technical basis are mentioned, but not necessarily Islamophobia.

I would suspect the same is true with Israel getting into NATO. In the case of Turkey, they actively seek to be in the EU as they are already in NATO, but Israel has not requested and there are obvious reasons why Israel may not want to be in NATO.

But how does population feelings affect national policy, do you suspect on these two issues, both toward Turkey and toward Israel? And I know that in many of our friends in Europe with strong leadership, that the trend of anti-Semitism at least seems to be on the decline. Dr. Bardají.

Mr. BARDAJÍ. Mr. Chairman, as you know and everyone is well aware, public opinion plays a very important role in the decision making of any political system. So in Europe as well.

On the case of Turkey, I think the revolution has been shifting one from initial support of bringing Turkey to European Union while the European Union was reaffirming itself, that has created a new image that getting Turkey in the current condition of the Lisbon treaty, would be a kind of time bomb for the decision making machine of the European Union. And that has been also translated because of the economic crisis in fears for rationale among some major countries population like in France, but that is similar to what they were experiencing with the fears of people coming from central and eastern Europe, it never materialized anyway.

Spain is probably one of the few countries that still supports Turkey into the European Union. We did that with a conservative government and the government today is still defending that option. Though all the polls the public opinion is not very supportive. But I understand that the government leading or the clear leadership will fight the majority of the public opinion critical, or at least reluctant to see Turkey into European Union.

Having said that, I think the current debate is not whether to bring it now, Turkey into a European Union, but what kind of relevant, and different strategic partnership we can get with Turkey for some time until we decide what to do with a European Union itself, which is a very divisive issue here today. We saw the Ireland vote against the Lisbon treaty. Three years ago, we had the spearhead with the so-called constitutional treaty. So I think the European Union is in the midst of un-society about the mechanism and the machinery will take place in the near future. And Turkey is a complicating factor more than anything else.

On Israel, as young Dr. Lesser said before, I think the public opinion is much more open for leadership from the governments, and the constellation of government today, and probably in the near future, it will be the best one ever in the recent history. So I think it won't be a critical issue for the governments.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Chairman, I know the time has run, but if I could just ask Ambassador Eran, I think his opening statement seemed to indicate while enthusiastic about Turkey joining NATO and referred to as—Turkey joining the EU and referred to it as the EU plus as a possibility. With regards to Israel and NATO, would you see a NATO plus rather than an Israeli membership should that be desired on the part of Israel? And how does the anti-Semitism play in?

Ambassador ERAN. I think that Turkey's membership in the EU is of crucial importance strategically speaking to the whole region. Given what we now witness in the case of Iran, one has to just look at the dangers of a similar process in Turkey. Although one is a Shiite society, the other one is a Sunni, and there is a big difference between the two. One is to look at strategic implications of

Turkey not becoming a member of the EU. Look to it from the Israeli point of view, obviously we would very much like to see Turkey within the EU. But given the fears in Europe, some of them are understandable given the size of the Turkish society when and if they go in there will be 100 million people. They will be the largest EU member if they manage to go in. And I can understand some of the difficulties in the public opinion, all leadership in Europe looking at the possible membership of Turkey.

I don't belong to the club which says that the borders of Europe are the borders of Christianity. But obviously, there is some of this notion within the public opinion in Europe. The membership of Israel in the EU is not in the same category. I think that if ever the Europeans would consider Israel a membership, they would say, well, you need to bring your neighbors with you or we will want to have an equal membership to either the Palestinian or any other Arab neighbor of Israel. That is something which I hope the Europeans will manage to escape or to avoid because of the principle of differentiability—as I said, we have something to offer to the EU and vice versa.

On the question of Israel and NATO, I would not recommend to my government, although I am not in public service anymore, to start a process of applying to a NATO unless we knew that eventually NATO is going to say yes. And so therefore, if you ask now the Israeli political leadership, "Are you interested in membership?" you may not get the same positive, clear answer that I am giving today to subcommittees.

I think that this has to be a dual carriage way, meaning both sides have to express somehow their wish to see a greater or different association between Israel and NATO.

The two are not similar in this respect, NATO and the EU. One can think of a possible less than full membership of Israel in the EU. In the case of NATO, you can find a device like an exchange of letters on Article 5, but eventually it is either membership or not. And therefore, I think that in the case of NATO, we should push for a full membership through a process which eliminates some of the difficulties.

In the case of the EU and Israel, I think that we can reach a satisfactory solution by what, as I call membership minus, that is to say we are not full members on the one end, but we do participate in many of the programs. And what is more important we become active in some of the institutions which are now close to non members.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you, thank you very much. Mr. Pence.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate again you calling this hearing, it is enormously informative. And I think as is evident in the testimony that we have heard it has enormous strategic significance for Israel and the United States.

I did note that it is rare that we have four Ph.D.s testifying before the committee, probably with four Ph.D.s there is probably at least five opinions at the table as the joke goes. It apparently didn't go well here.

The Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni recently said that there was quoted a new phase in the relations between Israel and the European Union. I am encouraged by that, as a somewhat unapologetic

Israel booster, I am heartened by that. I am very interested in maybe, Mr. Ambassador, with your background, diplomatic background in the region, maybe I could start with you.

What has been I guess two lines of thought. Number 1 is how serious do you judge the EU's—I will try a French word out—*rapprochement*. How serious is it? You have the EU parliamentary working group on the Middle East actually speaking out against upgrading ties with Israel. What are we really doing here? Is this public relations or is this closer to what the Foreign Minister is suggesting, which is hopeful indeed.

Secondly I would be very interested beginning with you, Mr. Ambassador, and then open to the balance of the panel's thoughts on how Arab countries in the region are responding to this warming of relations between Israel and the European Union. If memory serves, I think still only 2 out of 22 neighboring countries have recognized Israel formally. And that certainly doesn't account for the number of countries in the region that would wish Israel away. So what has been the regional reaction from your, not only official sources, but unofficial sources? Is this being welcomed in the Arab world? Does it have the possibility of catalyzing better relations in the region?

And secondly, how serious do you, Mr. Ambassador, or the balance of the panel all the way to Dr. Gardiner, how serious do you view this step forward in relations?

Ambassador ERAN. Thank you, Mr. Pence, for the questions. I think they are very, very important, very relevant.

There is certainly a large group in the European Parliament which is very critical of Israel. Recently some of them visited the country or the region and they did not hide their views.

On the other hand, given what we think the public opinion in Europe is, they are still in a minority big as they are as a minority, but they are still in the minority in the European Parliament. And the fact is they did not succeed in passing any resolution which calls for the suspension of the relations, something which happened in the beginning Intifada when there was a motion, but it didn't reach anywhere. And I suspect that they know their limitations in terms of numbers.

So I think that basically the EU as expressed in the recent meeting of the Association Council with Israel in the official statement, they do wish to see an upgrading of the relations. They recognize in the EU the value for the European Union in upgrading their relations. And I did emphasize it in my written statement what I am cautious about, and I made it very clear that they link it to the peace process and that is to say that basically any Arab neighbor which wants to stop this movement forward in the bilateral relations can say to the Europeans, well, the Israelis are not progressing enough or quickly enough in the peace process and also this process. Which brings me to the second question, what is the reaction in the Arab world?

Well, we know that both the PA Prime Minister Salaam Fayad, a very moderate Palestinian leader. He called upon the Europeans not to upgrade their relations because of the current situation as perceived by him. I am not saying that this is the true picture of the situation—but he approached the Europeans, so did the Egypt-

tians by the way, and we certainly protested to the Europeans and to the Palestinians and Egyptians on their approaches they made to Europe.

On the other hand, take NATO for example, every time we upgraded the relations with NATO the immediate Egyptian reaction was negative. But then, when they discovered the value in these relations for them as well, they said, well, we would like to get into the same position. So Israel was the first one to use or exploit the possibility of reaching an Individual Cooperation Program with NATO. And we were very pleased to see that 2 years later the Egyptians got into the same situation because they saw the merit in doing so. Certainly it doesn't raise any opposition on our side—to the contrary.

I think that therefore, there is some sort of a resentment in some Arab quarters to upgrading the relation between Israel and NATO and Israel and the EU. Eventually what they do is to say, "Well, if it is good for Israel, then it is good for us." I think that in this case both NATO and the EU recognized the leadership that we Israel take in terms of upgrading their relations.

Mr. LESSER. On this question, I mean, if I could just offer a further observation or two. One, I think on the question of seriousness—is Europe serious?—this touches on another question that was asked earlier. I think Europe is absolutely serious about upgrading the relationship in north-south terms with countries in the neighborhood, in North Africa, in the Levant, including Israel, broadly our range of topics. And the topics matter if you look at what Sarkozy is proposing for this new union for the Mediterranean. What is interesting about that is that it is not just about political dialogue, in fact, it is not about that. It is about a series of projects, environment, energy migration, et cetera. I think at that level they are completely serious. I think when one gets into the question of eventual membership, starting with the question of Turkey, obviously which is huge in scale for Europe and extremely consequential strategically. There the consensus breaks down. And I think that is a much harder, harder sell for Europe.

I think there is a lot of skepticism, in fact, in the southern Mediterranean among Arab states about participating in some of these dialogues—or both EU and NATO. It is not uniform, and I agree very much with Ambassador Eran's comment about the sort of demonstration effect of Israel building a more effective relationship through the Mediterranean dialogue with its individual partnership agreement and so on. Egypt was mentioned, Morocco was also exploring this. I think that is something to consider, thank you.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, unless there are others.

Mr. WEXLER. If I could just go to Mr. Sires of New Jersey.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you Mr. Chairman. Another great hearing. I thank you for being here. In the last few days, in the last few weeks, we have seen an increase in heated language from the representatives of the Iranian supreme leader and its military. And today they fired a rocket testing, but yet the Foreign Minister also discussed the willingness to talk to the department at 5. What do you make of this? How do you interpret these conflicting statements and efforts? And do you believe Javier Solana's meeting

could lead to anything, even at least conversations? It is only today, it doesn't look very promising, can you—Mr. Bardají.

Mr. BARDAJÍ. Thank you, I think it is a very important question. I tend to believe that we in Europe believe that we have biggest stake and quite a sweet carrot to convince the Iranians to behave responsibly. After 3 or 4 years of negotiating at the table, what we got is that the Iranians have accelerated the nuclear problems. We have reached no agreement whatsoever. The last offer, the last days by Solana in Tehran will mean nothing really for the nuclear efforts since they have already, at least that we know, 3,000 centrifuge running.

Obviously I have to also underline that Iran is not a very homogeneous society and regime. There are cracks in the regime and there are divergences in the view of how to approach the worst in dealing with the negotiations. But there is, at least, an agreement in the regime that the nuclear program is essential and vital for them. So I don't think we will have enough offering just in economic incentives to make them to freeze the program, and we will need to combine them with more thoughtfully diplomatic actions. There are many possibilities, one is getting Israel closer to NATO, although NATO sailing in the Gulf with a naval group. So the credibility of further actions is taken for real by Iranian regimes. But just giving them economic incentive is proof, up to now, totally wrong.

Mr. SIRES. Dr. Gardiner.

Mr. GARDINER. I fully agree with Dr. Bardají there. If you look at European Union negotiations over the past few years with Iran in the form of what the EU calls constructive engagement, the EU has achieved absolutely nothing at all, it has just bought the Iranian dictatorship valuable time to advance its nuclear ambitions. And I don't think it would be wise for the United States to support further continuing European incentives.

I think the kind of message that the Iranian regime would actually listen to would be, firstly, the credible threat of force; secondly, real path for economic sanctions, implemented by the European Union, a complete investment freeze, for example, in Iran. This would send a very clear message that the West means real business here.

At the moment, the Iranians are, frankly, I think laughing at the way in which the Europeans are handling themselves. The Europeans look extremely weak, they look as though they don't have a clue frankly how to deal with the Iranian situation. And the Iranians are running rings around Brussels at the moment and it is an extremely embarrassing situation for the European Union.

Mr. SIRES. Do you think that the testing of the rocket today has escalated things to a different level?

Mr. GARDINER. I think that it will create some new debate perhaps some new debate perhaps within the EU. However I don't think it is going to force a fundamental change in EU strategy. I think we will see more of the same, more carrots being offered to Iran, more incentives being offered all the time. I frankly don't think actually that the European Union is up to the task of confronting Iran. And it will be done probably to the United States, and Israel, and perhaps a coalition of key allies, including Britain, and perhaps some countries within Europe to stand up to Iran. But

I have very little faith in the power of the Brussels establishment to do the right thing with regard to the Iranian nuclear crisis.

Mr. BARDAJÍ. I don't have the intelligence now, but I think it could be also a reaction to what we had been seeing in the last days, the last week from here from Israel where the rumor of military activity has increased and also the exercises there are enforced by Israel over the Mediterranean has shown a clear capability to deal with a small number of facilities. I think somebody in the Revolutionary Guard could have taken the position to show also a solo force, in order to say we are not deterred by those increases of military activity, but we have to see that more in detail.

Mr. WEXLER. We have a series of votes. I just want to give Ms. Jackson Lee and Mr. Klein an opportunity if they wish.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, I will simply thank you for this joint hearing and emphasize that we have had recent experience traveling with my chairman, Mr. Ackerman, in looking at the strategic role and responsibilities of Israel. And I think as we look forward, we should be emphasizing improving relationship, as I think you are offering between Israel and Europe, and as well, to ensure that the safety and security of Israel, along with the recognition of the difficulty of that region, the utmost in the minds of the American foreign policy, but also working with the European Union. This is an important hearing and with that, Mr. Chairman, let me yield back my time.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you very much. Mr. Klein.

Mr. KLEIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for holding this hearing and thank the panel for participating today, we appreciate that. The only reference I would like to make would be, and I know there has been a little bit of conversation on U.N. world conference on racism, and what we can do together as the United States and Europe together to make sure this is a productive discussion as opposed to what occurred a while back.

But the ranking member of our committee of Foreign Affairs, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, held a meeting which I participated in with other members of many of the invited countries of Europe a few weeks ago to talk about this and to make sure that we all were moving the same direction. It is not a question of just boycotting it, but it is a question of working constructively to make sure it doesn't end up like the Durbin conference. If there is no positive, constructive, solidified position that we can be comfortable with, then we can always look away from it. But there is opportunity here to talk about racism on an international basis, but certainly not to end up with anything that was anywhere near what happened before, anything that just focuses on Israel and it just ends up being anti-Semitic and anti-Israel type of event.

Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to raise that point and appreciate the comments, whether it is now or later for the members.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you. We have got, I think, 6 or 7 minutes left in a series of votes. If Chairman Ackerman would agree, I think we want to thank the four witnesses for their very able testimony. Ambassador Eran, I think you just wanted the last word quickly for a moment?

Ambassador ERAN. 20 seconds, I want to say something positive about the European role in the case of Iran. The Europeans cannot

face the problem of Iran by themselves. What they need is the support of the United States to the diplomatic efforts, and mostly those of Russia and China. They have taken upon themselves the diplomatic effort, the diplomatic efforts plus the sanctions, the most preferred way of dealing with Iran. Therefore we need to strengthen the Europeans when they are facing the Iranians and it will be very important for the new administration in the United States to get the Russians and the Chinese on board of this effort. Thank you.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you. Thank you, gentlemen, for your excellent testimony. We are adjourned, thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:38 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

STATEMENT OF PROFESSOR UZI ARAD, CHAIRMAN, ATLANTIC FORUM OF ISRAEL, MATTHEW MARK HORN, NATIONAL POLICY DIRECTOR, AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS AND TOMMY STEINER, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, ATLANTIC FORUM OF ISRAEL

PREFACE

House Committee on Foreign Affairs (HCFA) Chairman Berman, Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen, HCFA Europe Subcommittee Chairman Wexler, Ranking Member Gallegly, HCFA Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee Chairman Ackerman, and, Ranking Member Pence, thank you and your hard-working and dedicated staff for not only holding this important and timely hearing, but for providing us with the opportunity to submit a statement for the record on the strategic importance and necessity of upgrading Israel's role within NATO.

We would be remiss, if we did not express our sincere thanks and appreciation for the vision of Europe Subcommittee Chairman Wexler and Full HCFA Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen for introducing H. Res. 235, supporting an upgrade in Israel's relationship with NATO, and to all of the co-sponsors who share that vision. We look forward to working closely with you in garnering additional co-sponsors; throughout the entire legislative process (including the subcommittee and full committee mark ups); and offering our full support in any way so that, not only does H. Res. 235 pass in the House, but a companion bill is offered in the Senate and that the White House as well as the Departments of State and Defense work in concert with the Congress and our 26, and soon to be 28, NATO allies to make upgrading Israel's formal standing within NATO a reality.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The American Jewish Congress (AJCongress) and the Atlantic Forum of Israel (AFI) commend the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe and the HCFA Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia for holding this extremely timely and important hearing in support of enhancing Europe-Israel relations. In doing so, the US House of Representatives recognizes the essential transatlantic dimension of both the US-Israel and the Europe-Israel relationships. The AJCongress and the Atlantic Forum of Israel established a joint project whereby both organizations collectively are actively promoting and advocating for the upgrading of NATO-Israel relations in the United States and Europe.

NATO is the crest of the Western democratic world and the principal multilateral institution of the Atlantic Community, with which Israel shares the core values enshrined in the North Atlantic Treaty. Not less importantly, the current strategic challenges and threats facing the Alliance, namely Radical Islam, global terrorism and the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) are the very same threats Israel faces. In this challenge, Israel is a natural partner to NATO. The Western civilization and the Atlantic Community, which NATO defends, are Israel's natural habitat. Having much to benefit from partnering with NATO, Israel, however, does not approach the Alliance empty-handed and has much to contribute. Said otherwise, Israel has a major strategic interest in developing a partnership with NATO from which the Alliance stands to benefit too. This Israeli interest has already been endorsed by Israeli political leaders calling upon NATO to offer Israel a strategic partnership.

Along with increased Israeli participation in NATO exercises and operations, Israel could share its knowledge and jointly develop strategic capabilities in a wide range of security and strategic issues, such as:

- Missile defense;
- Energy security;
- Special-operations and counter-insurgency warfare;
- Counter-terrorism;
- Defense R&D;
- Development and deployment of UAVs.

The US has a major role and interest in strengthening European-Israeli partnership, particularly through NATO in which the US commands a unique position alongside Europe. An ever closer partnership between Israel and NATO would serve US interests in a plethora of ways. First and foremost, in making Israel more secure, the US would in principle share the burden of its strategic commitments to Israel with Europe. Secondly, closer NATO-Israel relations would present opportunities for a better European understanding of the Israeli strategic outlook and security interests, thus contributing to easing the frictions between Europe and Israel whose shared values and ideals are often overlooked. Such a relationship would also demonstrate concretely the shared interests between Europe and Israel and the benefits Israel could provide to the Alliance in its unfolding post-September 11th challenges. Consequently, anchoring Israel to the Atlantic Alliance would reduce transatlantic disagreements, increase Israel's strategic value to the United States and, thus, also bolster the United States' capacity to better utilize transatlantic cooperation in addressing and carrying the unfolding challenges.

The current format of the NATO-Israel relationship, within the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue, has run its course. Due to its regional grouping, Israel has reached the glass ceiling of cooperation within the Mediterranean Dialogue. Despite numerous statements and communiqués restating the Allies' intention to open all the Partnership programs to the Mediterranean Dialogue countries, this has yet to eventuate and is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future—not necessarily because of Israel, but rather its Mediterranean interlocutors.

Thus, the next logical step in upgrading NATO-Israel relations would be in offering Israel a formal strategic partnership with the Alliance, a policy initiative endorsed by Israeli leaders. In her October 2007 address to the 2nd Annual Israel—NATO Symposium, Israel Foreign Minister Livni stated, “Israel seeks a formal partnership relationship with NATO. Israel's efforts to enhance relations with NATO are part of its broader foreign policy to bolster Israel's multilateral diplomacy . . . while NATO re-aligns itself, according to functional needs and global requirements, to meet the challenges of our generation, it will find in Israel a willing and reliable partner.” Such an upgrading would provide Israel not only with aforementioned concrete benefits to both parties, but also, perhaps more importantly, considerable international and strategic advantages for Israel, mainly:

- Normalize Israel's international status in one of the most important structures of the Western world;
- Bring Israel closer to the Western world's primary political-strategic institution dealing with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Israel however, cannot join the sole partnership framework of NATO, the Partnership for Peace (PfP). Therefore, Israel will be able to attain formal partnership only if NATO reforms the structure of its external relations. However, Israel needs not to receive preferential treatment, nor to be singled out as a special case of partnership. The debate on transforming NATO's partnership has been underway for the last three years. Most, if not all, of NATO allies, along with NATO's international staff, recognize the problematic nature of NATO's current partnerships and structures of cooperation with non-members. The current debate on defining NATO's new “strategic concept” and the next generation of its external relations—the idea of “global partnerships”—to be concluded by the 2010 NATO Summit, offers a unique opportunity to upgrade Israel's official status.

The case for reforming NATO's partnership goes well beyond the case of Israel. Time has come to reshape the Alliance's partnerships and design them on a case by case, functional, flexible and tailored basis, so as to best serve both NATO's goals and missions and the partners' interests and capabilities, Israel included. Former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, has championed Israel's membership in NATO, as he puts it “Israel is the West;” former Republican Presidential Candidate Giuliani has called for Israel's membership in NATO; and most recently Sir Rupert Murdoch, in his April 2008 address to the Atlantic Council he stated the same.

The American Jewish Congress and the Atlantic Forum of Israel calls upon you and your colleagues in the Congress to endorse such trans-

formation of NATO's partnerships and to support Israel's bid for formal partnership with NATO, as you so aptly set forth in H. Res. 235.

In the meantime however, much has yet to be done to further facilitate closer relations between NATO and Israel even within the existing framework. In this respect, the US and its NATO allies should try to remove obstacles for this relationship—by further individualizing NATO-Israel relations. This should begin with offering Israel a Status of Force Agreement (SOFA), which would facilitate and enhance military-to-military cooperation. The absence of such arrangement effectively precludes the expansion of Israeli cooperation and involvement in NATO's operations and exercises.

The SOFA issue is a critical one, and the American Jewish Congress and the Atlantic Forum of Israel will welcome a statement from you and your Congressional colleagues calling upon the Department of State to have the US take the lead in promoting Israel's request to conclude in the near future a SOFA with NATO.

NATO-ISRAEL RELATIONS—CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

Israel's relations with NATO evolved within the framework of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. Launched more than a decade ago, the Mediterranean Dialogue was designed as an effort to build trust with North African and Middle Eastern countries, including Israel. The initial aim of the Dialogue was to improve mutual understanding, and to dispel misconceptions about NATO's aims and policies. The Mediterranean Dialogue has undoubtedly made considerable progress and has served as a useful confidence building mechanism.

The Mediterranean Dialogue started slowly, but it gathered momentum. The number of Dialogue partners grew from five to seven; Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and of course Israel. The menu of concrete cooperation activities increased as well.

The turning point in NATO's attitude to the region and to the Mediterranean Dialogue can be traced to the events of September 11th, 2001. NATO's Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has since repeatedly stated that most of the threats currently facing the Alliance originate from the Broader Middle East. In a 24 February 2005 address in Israel under the auspices of the Atlantic Forum, (the first visit to Israel by a NATO Secretary General), Mr. Scheffer stated:

It is not difficult to see why building closer relations between us has become a strategic imperative. Our strategic environment is confronting us with new developments that are simply too powerful to be ignored: [first, the interplay of Middle Eastern and transatlantic security is becoming ever more evident. Demographics, economics, and energy needs create an ever-closer interdependence between us. New threats—such as terrorism, the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, and transnational organized crime—affect us all and require a common response. 9/11 and the Iraq crisis merely reinforced what we already knew: how this region will evolve will affect Euro-Atlantic security in a fundamental way. So the Middle East and the transatlantic community are—to use a fashionable term—increasingly interdependent . . .

This stance was officially expressed at the 2004 Istanbul Summit. In the Istanbul Communiqué, the Allies agreed on a more ambitious and expanded framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue. NATO leaders announced their desire to transform the Mediterranean Dialogue into a "genuine partnership," but the official status of the Dialogue remained a framework of cooperation. While the leaders' decision to open the partnership programs to the Mediterranean Dialogue countries was reiterated since in subsequent NATO summits, some of the programs have yet to be offered.

On the political side, progress includes the two Defense Ministers' meetings and two Foreign Ministers' meetings. In 2005–2007, the Chiefs of Defense of the Mediterranean Dialogue countries' met seven times with their NATO counterparts. In addition to greater dialogue, the number of opportunities for concrete, practical cooperation under the Mediterranean Dialogue process has increased. New tools and mechanisms have been derived from the Partnership for Peace program and opened to Mediterranean Dialogue countries, but on a limited basis. Whereas in the early days of the Mediterranean Dialogue, the annual work program consisted of some 35 activities, today that number has risen to over 800.

Perhaps more importantly, the Istanbul Summit has also led to the development of bilateral tracks within the framework of the multilateral process of the Mediterranean Dialogue. In October 2006, after a prolonged negotiation process of more than 18 months, facilitated and promoted by the Atlantic Forum and the German Marshall Fund, Israel and NATO concluded an Individual Cooperation Program

(ICP). Israel was the first country outside of Europe—and the first among NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue countries—to reach such an agreement.

This step is of importance because from its outset, actual cooperation within the Mediterranean Dialogue was limited mostly to the multilateral framework. Thus, while Israel considered itself a natural partner of NATO, it was nonetheless restricted to the joint agenda of the other Mediterranean Dialogue countries and the lowest common denominator, essentially Egypt, which from the beginning was not interested in NATO enhancing its presence in the area. Egypt was the only Mediterranean Dialogue country that formally opposed the sending of NATO forces to southern Lebanon during the 2006 military campaign. In this context one can also understand why Israel expressed its appreciation of having Egypt the second country of the Mediterranean Dialogue with a concluded ICP a year later in October 2007. Jordan is about to be the third Mediterranean Dialogue country to conclude an ICP with NATO.

The NATO-Israel ICP is a wide-ranging framework that enables the expansion of the scope of current cooperation. Detailing 27 areas of cooperation, the ICP includes: response to terrorism, intelligence sharing, armament cooperation and management, nuclear, biological and chemical defense, military doctrine and exercises, civilian emergency plans, and disaster preparedness.

Yet, while meant to reduce the current restrictions imposed by the multilateral framework, the ICP bears certain limits and shortcomings. NATO officials have stated the so-called need to retain a certain balance within the Mediterranean Dialogue. That is to say that NATO would not wish for Israel to move “too far” ahead in comparison to the other Mediterranean countries. Some would consider gratifying the private position of senior-most NATO officials expressing their delight at the conclusion of the ICP with Egypt because it allows for moving ahead with Israel. Others, however, would be somewhat dismayed that Israel’s relations with NATO are held hostage by Egypt. This “glass ceiling” seems to continue inhibiting Israel’s ability to expand cooperation with NATO, as both parties have recently launched a review of the NATO-Israel ICP.

The ICP as a framework agreement, if not as a laundry list of areas of cooperation, is not sufficiently detailed to commence implementation of any of the programs and activities listed. Rather, the implementation requires separate tedious negotiation and coordination. Israel has also sought to implement the undertakings of NATO’s leaders to open up all partnership frameworks to Mediterranean Dialogue countries. Yet several critical programs have been excluded to the detriment of the Alliance.

In addition, the lack of formal partnership has an adverse effect upon the relationship. As opposed to the “Partnership for Peace” (PfP) countries, NATO has refrained from concluding a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Mediterranean Dialogue Countries—the kind it does have with the PfP countries. This has led to substantial impediments in promoting the bilateral relationship and developing military-to-military cooperation. Senior defense officials and IDF command have been reluctant to send Israeli troops to NATO exercises. Yet another example is the posting of an Israeli Navy Liaison Officer to the NATO Allied Joint Force Command Naples, the headquarters of Operation Active Endeavour. Israel announced in 2006 that it is willing to contribute to NATO’s maritime anti-terrorist operation in the Mediterranean Sea, Operation Active Endeavour. Later in the year, NATO and Israel officially exchanged letters agreeing to the posting of a liaison officer. The officer was eventually posted only in early 2008 after protracted negotiations working to overcome the absence of a SOFA between NATO and Israel. Both NATO and Israeli officials have expressed their satisfaction with Israel’s modest contribution to Operation Active Endeavour. However, without a SOFA, Israel will not be able to substantially increase its involvement, nor would any “Western Democratic” nation similarly situated.

The Second NATO-Israel Symposium held in October 2007 revealed this dissatisfaction. A senior Ministry of Defense official went on the record stating that one could learn more from reading newspapers than from the official intelligence sharing between Israel and NATO. He said that Israel seeks any opportunity to improve the relationship, but that “with every initiative to develop this relationship, the frustration is bigger than the hope.”

This criticism, along with the Israeli disappointment in NATO’s unwillingness to assume a role in Lebanon, reflects however a clearly positive indication. It exposes the high expectations Israel holds of NATO and of Israel’s repeated desire to enhance this relationship and to become a formal partner of NATO. This position was expressed at the Second NATO-Israel Symposium—by the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Tzipi Livni, and the Head of the Opposition and

Former Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu (excerpts submitted as addenda to this statement).

THE CASE FOR NATO-ISRAEL PARTNERSHIP

Whereas the issue of a closer Israeli relationship with NATO seemed obscure just a few years ago, a real policy debate is taking place with regards to Israel's long-term objectives vis-à-vis NATO. This process began against the backdrop of transatlantic fluctuations in the spring of 2004. As part of the Broader Middle East and North Africa agenda, the June NATO Summit in Istanbul decided to enhance the Mediterranean Dialogue and to transform it into a "genuine partnership." This offered a window of opportunity to further develop Israel-NATO relations. The 2004 European Neighborhood Policy and subsequent bilateral EU-Israel Action Plan, further demonstrated that interests and values are increasingly tying—strategically and mutually—Israel with Europe and North America. Time had come to anchor Israel to the Euro-Atlantic community.

Benefiting from Ron Asmus' leadership, the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Atlantic Forum of Israel held in 2004 meetings and symposia in Israel and Europe. The idea to utilize the NATO Istanbul Summit to advance NATO-Israel bilateral relationship materialized at a visit to NATO HQ in September 2004. At a meeting with NATO's Secretary General, a senior NATO official prodded those present that Israel be the first country to submit an individual co-operation program. A dedicated session at the Annual Herzliya Conference in December of that year participated by members of the North Atlantic Council, the official executive body of NATO, led by UK Permanent Representative, raised the policy and media awareness in Israel to the new developments in Euro-Atlantic community and to the opportunity of enhancing relations with NATO. These meetings and events paved the way to an Israeli initiative to further develop relations with NATO, which was submitted in January 2005 to the Secretary General of NATO.

The German Marshall Fund and the Atlantic Forum of Israel closely supported the negotiation process. Culminating in the conclusion of the NATO-Israel Individual Cooperation Program in October 2006, the new agreement was announced at the inaugural NATO-Israel Symposium co-organized by the Atlantic Forum and NATO. At the Second NATO-Israel Symposium in 2007, Israeli political leaders went on record calling upon NATO to upgrade NATO-Israel relations and to establish a formal partnership. This idea was further fleshed out at a special session of the 2008 Herzliya Conference by the co-authors of this statement. Also, participating in this well received session were NATO Contact Point Ambassador to Israel, Michael Zantovsky and Sr. Rafael Bardaji of Spain, who is testifying before you today. This discussion pointed out that enhanced NATO-Israel relations and formal partnership status entail practical benefits along with broader international and strategic advantages.

On the practical side, formal partnership could offer concrete outcomes, including:

- Establishing an officially accredited representation of Israel to NATO—Israeli diplomats and defense officials working with NATO are not officially accredited to NATO and they are part of Israel's Mission to the EU, whilst Partner countries have permanent missions situated at NATO HQs. A permanent mission at the HQs in Brussels would enhance Israel's concrete and direct day-to-day involvement in NATO;
- Signing a SOFA with NATO—This would pave the way to enhance military-to-military cooperation between NATO and Israel, in the form of both operations (such as Operation Active Endeavour) and exercises. A SOFA would solve the issue of posting officers and troops to NATO operations and exercises, commissioning permanent Israeli defense officials and military officers to NATO Military Command, enabling further expansion of NATO-Israel co-operation to the mutual benefit of both parties;
- Israeli access to all NATO joint programs and agencies, providing concrete benefits to both parties. Israel's attempts to establish a working relationship with NATO's Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) bears considerable benefits. This case is only indicative.
- Opening up new political multilateral frameworks—full partnership would provide Israel an official seat on the various institutions that are shared by both members and partners, such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. Around that table, which is assembled far more often than the Mediterranean Dialogue fora, Israel would find more like-minded partners and members to develop joint activities of mutual benefit. New opportunities would be offered,

and Israel and the allies might well discover additional areas and benefits hitherto unexplored.

Consequently, Israel would no longer be compared to, or held back by, other Mediterranean countries. The advantages of NATO-Israeli formal partnership, however, extend beyond practical benefits, important as they may be. Simply put, formal partnership would normalize Israel's international status in one of the most important structures of the Western world.

NATO is not just a military alliance. It is also a multilateral political institution, where negotiation, clubbing and networking are as important. Moreover, NATO's Secretary General, supported by the United States and Germany, and hopefully now France, is leading the effort to resurrect NATO as the main political forum of the Atlantic community, focusing to a large extent on the Broader Middle East. Therefore, the enhancing of relations between NATO and Israel should be considered a building-block in forging a new multilateral relationship based on formal partnership between Israel and the Atlantic Community of like-minded Western and liberal democracies.

The enhancing strategic integration and the close political relations between both sides of the Atlantic is likely to bolster the role of NATO as the primary strategic institution for dealing with the common threats emanating from the Broader Middle East, particularly the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the nuclearization of Iran. Due to its capabilities, one can reasonably assume that NATO will be called upon to deal with military contingencies related to the effort to prevent Iran's nuclearization, and should that fail, to contain and deter a nuclear Iran. NATO has taken concrete steps to deal with such contingencies.

At NATO's Bucharest Summit earlier this year, and viewing developments in Iran and the Broader Middle East, NATO leaders stated that ballistic missile proliferation poses an increasing threat to Allies' forces, territory and populations, which—at least in part—could be countered by missile defense. Welcoming the US program to deploy a missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland, the leaders decided to ascertain that the US system would be an integral part of any future NATO-wide missile defense architecture, which would ultimately extend coverage to all Allied territory and populations not otherwise covered by the planned US system. The leaders tasked the North Atlantic Council and the international staff to develop options for comprehensive missile defense architecture for review at the 2009 Summit.

Israel has a vital strategic interest in being at the table deliberating these issues of critical importance to its very existence and in cooperating with NATO on developing capabilities, such as missile defense. As recently pointed out in a public statement of a senior NATO official, Israel has much to contribute to NATO's capabilities and operations, including in the development and operation of UAVs and counter-insurgency/asymmetric warfare. Israel has already been lending its military and intelligence expertise in the field of counter-insurgencies to NATO, but on a limited basis due to its formal status. Testifying before the House's Armed Services Committee in March 2007, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General John Craddock, portrayed Israel as a "model state" and a "critical military partner" in "this entangled seam of the Middle East."

Policy awareness to NATO-Israel relations has also risen due to statements issued by senior Atlantic political figures arguing for upgrading Israel's status in NATO up to the point of offering membership to Israel. President Aznar of Spain has led the path in this regard and he has been since followed by Senator McCain, the presumptive Republican Presidential nominee; former Democratic Presidential contender Senator Edwards and by former Republican Presidential contender Mayor Giuliani, and the Czech Deputy Prime Minister Alexandr Vondra.

The coming years are likely to be the most strategically challenging for NATO and Israel. It would therefore be only natural for both parties to enhance their relationship by placing Israel on an equal formal footing to allow both parties to meet the joint threats and challenges together.

TRANSFORMING NATO'S PARTNERSHIPS

NATO's current sole partnership framework, the Partnership for Peace (PfP) is governed by the Basic Document of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. According to Article 12 of this document, the Basic Document is open to accession only to OSCE Participating States. Since Israel is an OSCE Mediterranean Partner for Cooperation, formally it cannot become a partner of NATO unless NATO reforms its partnership and cooperation frameworks and structures with non-member countries.

Israel needs not to receive preferential treatment, nor to be singled out as a special case of partnership. The debate on transforming NATO's partnership has been underway for the last three years. Most, if not all, NATO allies, along with NATO's international staff, recognize the problematic nature of NATO's current partnerships and structures of cooperation with non-members. The out-dated geographical underpinnings that lumps together advanced democratic Western nations with developing Central Asian countries in the PfP, is no less odd than the grouping of Israel with a non-Mediterranean African country in the Mediterranean Dialogue (Mauritania) or than affording the same formal status to both Australia and China (designated as contact countries).

Noteworthy, the issue of NATO's partnerships is part of a broader problem of adapting NATO structures, institutions, and doctrines to the challenges of the 21st Century and the principal threats posed by radical Islam, terrorism and the proliferation of WMD. To meet these, NATO must undergo a conceptual transformation that would redefine the geographical parameters of the Alliance, placing it on functional-strategic and value-based foundations. This debate has been led by President Aznar of Spain and Rafael Bardaji in their ambitious treatise *NATO: An Alliance for Freedom*.

NATO has moved in this direction by adopting the "Comprehensive Political Guidance" at the 2006 Riga Summit, a document detailing priorities and capability issues, planning disciplines and intelligence for the next 10 to 15 years. This initial step is of importance—as it acknowledges the urgent need to transform structures and to follow up with re-writing NATO's Strategic Concept and within it the format of its partnership. Addressing the GMF's Brussels Forum in March 2008, NATO's Secretary General outlined the process of completing the institutional transformation of NATO. He posited that the 2009 NATO Summit, marking the Alliance's Sixtieth Anniversary, should lay out the basic parameters for a new "strategic concept." In Bucharest, NATO leaders indeed accepted the Secretary General's recommendation and concluded to work out a "Declaration on Alliance Security" by 2009.

This declaration and the subsequent new strategic concept should incorporate the reforming of NATO's partnerships—the next generation of its external relations, based on the idea of "global partnerships." Ideally, the end result should be having adopting a new format that would for designing bilateral partnerships with non-Allies on a case by case, functional, flexible and tailored basis. Such a format would accommodate and best serve both NATO's goals and missions and the partners' interests and capabilities, Israel included.

Such a new framework would not necessarily mean disbanding current regional fora of NATO, such as the Mediterranean Dialogue or the Gulf Countries' ICI group. Rather, it would allow these important frameworks to enhance much needed political dialogue on mutual and regionally-exclusive policy and strategic issues. Moreover, it is possible to envisage the formation of new regional groupings, such as one dedicated to NATO's Central Asian partners.

Through our joint project, the American Jewish Congress and the Atlantic Forum of Israel have resolved to promote this effort which ultimately serves the national security interests of both the United States, Israel and the Alliance. Furthermore, we call upon the US Congress to seize this matter too and to promote this agenda within the US Administration and through the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

NOTE: This document is based to some extent on a paper co-authored by Ambassador Dr. Oded Eran, Prof. Uzi Arad, and Tommy Steiner, which was commissioned by the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) and submitted to the international think-tank conference on "Transforming NATO in a New Global Era"—a companion event to the Riga NATO Summit in November 2006.

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After twenty-five years of distinguished service in the Mossad, Israel's Secret Intelligence Service, during which he served in senior positions in Israel and abroad, culminating in his tenure as Director of Intelligence (at a Major General rank), Professor Arad was appointed by then Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to serve as his Foreign Policy Advisor. Today, Professor Arad is the Advisor of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Prior to his career in government, Professor Arad was a Professional Staff Member with the Hudson Institute in New York and a Research Fellow at Tel Aviv University's Center for Strategic Studies. Professor Arad received his Bachelor's degree from Tel Aviv University. In 1971, he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship for advanced studies at Princeton University, where he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in International Relations.

MATTHEW MARK HORN—National Policy Director of the American Jewish Congress, Mr. Horn bears primary responsibility for developing and implementing the organization's international and domestic policy, as well as its congressional and executive branch policy and legislative advocacy and strategy. Prior to his current position, Mr. Horn served in the Bush administration as the Special Assistant for International Security Affairs (ISA) & International Security Policy (ISP) in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Legislative Affairs), for which he was awarded the Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service.

Before his administration position, Mr. Horn was the Director of Federal Affairs at the MWW Group. Mr. Horn also served as the counsel and legislative assistant to Representative Benjamin A. Gilman, then-Chairman of the House International Relations Committee. He was appointed by the OSCE as legal advisor for elections missions in the Balkans. Mr. Horn served with honor and distinction in the United States Marines Corps. He earned his BA (summa cum laude) from Fairleigh-Dickinson University and earned his juris doctor from Pace University School of Law. He also attended the U.S. Naval Academy as a Secretary of the Navy enlisted Marine appointee (class of '89).

TOMMY STEINER—Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Forum of Israel and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Policy and Strategy, at IDC Herzliya, Mr. Steiner leads policy research projects on EU and NATO relations with Israel, the Mediterranean and the Broader Middle East. Concurrently, Mr. Steiner teaches International Relations and Security Studies at the IDC's Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy.

Mr. Steiner regularly advises the Israeli Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Finance and the National Security Council on his fields of expertise, which include EU and NATO relations with Israel, and regional cooperation and politics in the Mediterranean and Asia-Pacific. Mr. Steiner earned his M.A. (*cum laude*) in International Relations from the Hebrew University, where he pursues his Ph.D. He is the Recipient of the Harkavy Award.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

American Jewish Congress

The American Jewish Congress is an association of Jewish Americans organized to defend Jewish interests at home and abroad through public policy advocacy—using diplomacy, legislation, and the courts.

Five subjects comprise the core of our agenda:

- Safety and security of Israel and the world Jewish community, especially in the face of worldwide terrorism;
- Fighting to eradicate the new anti-Semitism, which threatens Jews everywhere;
- Preserving religious freedom in the United States through separation of Church and State;
- Energy independence and stopping the flow of petrodollars that fund terrorism;
- Supporting moderate Muslim countries and prominent individuals who oppose radical Islam and believe in “enlightened moderation” as the message of Islam.

The American Jewish Congress was organized to provide a voice at Versailles for the Jews of Europe whose lives were disrupted by World War I, and to establish a mechanism for democratic decision-making for the Jewish community here at home. More than 350,000 Jews from throughout the U.S. selected delegates to attend the first American Jewish “Congress.” Among those elected were such giants as Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Judge Louis Brandeis, Judge Felix Frankfurter, and Golda Meier Meyerson, then from Milwaukee. At that Congress, Wise set forth principles that were unique for the time and that continue to guide us today: that Jews are entitled not merely to charity, but to justice, and that there exist fundamental rights to which Jews and men and women of all faiths are entitled.

We continue to fight in defense of those Jewish rights today:

- For our right to religious freedom;
- For the right of Jews to participate as full partners in American society; and
- For the right of Jews to safety and security against anti-Semitism, terrorism, and violence against the State of Israel.

We were the first Jewish Defense Agency to:

- Support the establishment of a Jewish state;
- Boycott Nazi goods in the 1930s—over the objections of most other Jewish agencies;
- Pioneer the use of the courts in the 1940s to defend Jewish rights—at a time when others cautioned that Jews should not be outspoken.

For that reason, and because great jurists (including Justices Brandeis and Frankfurter) have been among our founders and leaders, we are often called: “The Attorney General for the Jewish People.” We are outspoken advocates for the rights and interests of Jews here and abroad in the courts, the U.S. Congress, the Executive branch, state houses, and in foreign capitals throughout the world. With offices throughout the U.S. and overseas, we are an effective voice defending Jewish interests and advancing Jewish hopes, values, and aspirations.

Atlantic Forum of Israel

Formed in 2004, the Atlantic Forum of Israel is an exclusive network-based policy organization working with prominent individuals and organizations from Israel, North America and Europe to advance Israel’s association with the Euro-Atlantic Community.

The Forum’s networking and policy research yield concrete policy results. These activities have helped to generate a recognizable amount of intellectual and political curiosity in Israel and in the Euro-Atlantic community and have helped to place the issue of closer Israeli ties with the Euro-Atlantic community on the policy agenda. The Forum played an important role particularly in enhancing Israel’s relations with NATO and supported the conclusion of the first NATO-Israel ICP, which was announced at the Inaugural Annual NATO-Israel Symposium in October 2006.

Whereas the issue of a closer Israeli relationship with NATO and the EU seemed obscure issues just a few years ago, today there is the start of a real public debate that is starting to take place. The Forum maintains close working relations with NATO and the EU and is involved in the run-up towards major meetings and summits of both by drawing attention to the mutual interests in enhancing and upgrading Israel relations with NATO and the EU. Israel’s leadership has also endorsed the Forum’s initiative to seek formal partnership with NATO. This initiative—has become cornerstone for Forum’s activities.

The Atlantic Forum of Israel is NATO’s public diplomacy primary partner in Israel. Part of the international network of the Atlantic Treaty Association, the Forum also promotes the principles and missions of the North Atlantic Treaty. The Forum uniquely leverages the following courses of actions:

- **Engaging and networking** with the main summits, elite forums, foundations and institutions of the business, media, academic, and diplomatic establishments operating in the Euro-Atlantic arena (e.g., German Marshall Fund of the US, Trilateral Commission);
- **Educating and informing policy communities** by also creating a networked platform of knowledge dedicated to the transatlantic multilateral agenda and to Israel relations with the community across a broad range of fields—diplomacy, security, economy, culture, science and technology, culture and society;
- **Policy research and advocacy** to instigate and sustain the strategic and policy debate among senior decision-makers and officials;
- **Targeted activities** in Israel and abroad involving executive policy-makers and their senior staff to attain policy impact.

Contain Iran: Admit Israel to NATO

Ronald D. Asmus

The choice of how to respond to Iran's growing threat to the West in general and Israel in particular is not an easy one. One option is to try to stop Iran's nuclear program via an air and missile strike—but such a step is unlikely to work militarily and could have disastrous consequences. The other is to shift to a longer-term strategy of containment while working for peaceful regime change. While that might work over time, it is unlikely to stop Iran from going nuclear in the short term if it is determined to do so. While working to prevent Iran from going nuclear, the West must think now about what to do if we fail.

One important element has been missing from the debate: NATO. What can the alliance do to help address the growing likelihood that Iran will acquire nuclear weapons? Let us not forget that it is European capitals that would be within striking distance of Iranian nuclear arms. NATO would have to return to its classic mission of defending Europe by deterring a nuclear threat.

This development would also accelerate the debate in NATO over a regional missile defense system. The alliance would have to reorient its defense shield to confront the greatest threats to its members, emanating from the wider Middle East, in particular from a nuclear-armed Iran.

But the country most threatened by a future Iranian nuclear capability is, of course, Israel. It would be a mistake to dismiss

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's rantings about Israel as mere posturing or a bluff. One lesson from Sept. 11 is that we should not limit our strategic imagination or underestimate our enemies in the Middle East. When someone says he wants to wipe you off the map, he might just mean it. If, then, the West decides that a military strike to deny Iran the nuclear option is too risky and instead opts for a policy of deterrence and long-term peaceful regime change, it must also take steps to ensure Israel's protection for that interim period.

THE United States already has a de facto security commitment to Israel. Any future U.S. president would go to the defense of that country if its existence were threatened by a nuclear-armed Iran. And in spite of the anti-Israeli and anti-

THE BEST WAY TO PROVIDE ISRAEL WITH . . . ADDITIONAL SECURITY IS TO UPGRADE ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COLLECTIVE DEFENSE ARM OF THE WEST: NATO.

CONFIGURING AN UPGRADED ISRAEL-NATO RELATIONSHIP WILL REQUIRE CAREFUL DIPLOMACY AND PLANNING. BUT WHAT MUST BE CLEAR IS THAT THE WEST IS PREPARED TO MATCH THE GROWING BELLICOSITY AGAINST ISRAEL BY STEPPING UP ITS COMMITMENT TO THE EXISTENCE OF THE JEWISH STATE.

NATO HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO MOVE TOO FAR TOO FAST WITH ISRAEL, PREFERRING TO WAIT FOR MORE PROGRESS IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND WANTING TO MOVE FORWARD IN COOPERATION WITH OTHER ARAB MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES IN PARALLEL.

BUT THIS IS NO LONGER THE TIME FOR POLITICAL CORRECTNESS. IT IS TIME TO BREAK THAT LINK AND NOT HOLD FUTURE ISRAELI-NATO TIES HOSTAGE TO HAMAS OR THE BROADER VAGARIES OF NATO'S OVERALL MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE.

Semidie voices that one can hear in Europe, there is little doubt that European leaders such as Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy would also stand tall and defend Israel against an Iranian threat. Given this situation, basic deterrence theory tells us that it is more credible and effective if those commitments are clear and unambiguous.

The best way to provide Israel with that additional security is to upgrade its relationship with the collective defense arm of the West: NATO. Whether that upgraded relationship culminates in membership for Israel or simply a much closer strategic and operational defense relationship can be debated. After all, a classic security guarantee requires clear and recognized borders to be defended—something Israel does not have today.

Configuring an upgraded Israel-NATO relationship will require careful diplomacy and planning. But what must be clear is that the West is prepared to match the growing bellicosity against Israel by stepping up its commitment to the existence of the Jewish state.

THERE are growing signs that Israel is interested in such a relationship with NATO. About two years ago, I was approached by a group of Israelis and asked to help facilitate a closer Israeli-NATO dialogue. At the time, the idea seemed a bit far-fetched to many.

Since then, however, a real debate has emerged in Israel over building closer ties to both NATO and the European Union. Israel has also presented the alliance with a plan for a step-by-step upgrade in bilateral cooperation. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has paid his first visit there, and talks on closer cooperation are underway.

Talking with my Israeli interlocutors two years ago, I asked them how they envisioned the circumstances under which Israel might one day seek NATO membership. They laid out two scenarios. The first was one in which Israel was moving toward a final peace

settlement with Palestinians and an upgraded relationship with NATO became a key element in a package to persuade the Israeli public to opt for peace. The second was a scenario in which Iran acquired nuclear weapons and posed a real and growing threat to Israel. Having lost its own extended deterrence, Israel would turn to the West and NATO to help guarantee its very real security needs.

I would much prefer that we were faced with the first scenario, and one day we may reach that point, although the victory of Hamas in Palestinian elections suggests we shouldn't hold our breath. But the second scenario may become reality for Israel and the West. And that is the one that must determine the future pace of Israeli-NATO cooperation.

NATO has been reluctant to move too far too fast with Israel, preferring to wait for more progress in the peace process and wanting to move forward in cooperation with other Arab Mediterranean countries in parallel.

But this is no longer the time for political correctness. It is time to break that link and not hold future Israeli-NATO ties hostage to Hamas or the broader vagaries of NATO's overall Mediterranean dialogue. While continuing to expand ties with these other Arab countries, we must recognize that the threat Israel faces is qualitatively different, as is our security commitment to that country.

Several leading Europeans have called for NATO to embrace Israel, but this debate will not get serious until the United States—Israel's main ally—puts its weight behind the idea. The time has come to do so.

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José María Aznar

To me there is no doubt that the most important threat we are facing today is fundamentalist Islam. That was what guided me to promote the study "NATO: An Alliance for Freedom" (FAES, 2005). The two basic ideas defended in it were, first, to change the strategic approach of NATO, moving the organization decisively into the fight against Islamist terrorism. If NATO was created to defend our liberties and way of life, it should continue to do so, acting now

I know that certain things are easier said than done. Changing NATO in the direction I suggest is one of them. Bringing to life such a transformation will require a great deal of energy and fine-tuned skills, but, above all, it will require a strong political leadership, something not commonly found in today's political landscape.

In more general terms, the results of the

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mid-term elections in the United States have resulted in a more complicated political dynamic. Even if decisions by George W. Bush—like the “surge option” for Iraq—mean that he is very committed to success or a strategy of victory, the perspective of the coming presidential elections in 2008 will further complicate the U.S. foreign agenda.

ON the other hand, Europe is trapped by its internal anxieties. There are objective problems that will become more acute over time, such as the demographic decline we are facing. If bringing to life new babies is a good indicator of historical responsibility, then we must accept that Europeans are not very much concerned with the future. And when you lose track of your horizon, when you are not paying attention to tomorrow, difficult decisions and painful actions tend to be postponed, if addressed at all.

Political leadership can change that, but until that moment arrives, what we find is a Europe overwhelmed by fear: fear of globalization; fear of defending our identity; fear of the actions of our allies; fear of our enemies that can create havoc among us. And fear, never forget, favors paralysis.

This is why I believe we must do whatever is in our hands to strengthen and to reinforce our camp—the Western world. If we really want to prevail in this civilizational struggle, there is a road we must walk together. We need to start rebuilding the West. We need an Atlantic America firmly anchored in the world; we need a strong Atlantic Europe; and we need an Atlanticist Israel.

I am fully convinced that Israel must be part of NATO. I know that there have been several steps already taken last year to move NATO and Israel closer to each other, but I believe that Israel should not take the back door as the entrance to the Alliance.

We must understand that it is mutually beneficial to have Israel as a full NATO member. Take the case of Iran, for instance. Despite the New Intelligence Estimate, I think that nobody can have any doubt

about the real intentions of Teheran concerning its nuclear program. The ayatollahs want the bomb, and unless we do something to thwart their efforts, they will get the bomb. We have spent four years now using diplomatic means to bring about a freeze in Iranian nuclear research, to no avail.

I THINK we must do whatever is in our power to prevent Iran from becoming nuclear. If Iran sees and feels that Israel is an integral part of the West, I think our deterrence posture will be strengthened. As I see it, having a NATO umbrella over the Middle East will have a beneficial impact. It

... [I]F ISRAEL BECOMES PROGRESSIVELY MORE ISOLATED FROM THE NATO ALLIES, THE CHANCES WILL INCREASE THAT A MISCALCULATION COULD TAKE PLACE, ENGULFING EVERYONE INTO A CONFLICT OF INCALCULABLE CONSEQUENCES.

will serve to strengthen stability. Alternatively, if Israel becomes progressively more isolated from the NATO allies, the chances will increase that a miscalculation could take place, engulfing everyone into a conflict of incalculable consequences.

Secondly, day after day, we are witnessing that Palestinian nationalism is being transformed into Islamist extremism. The Hamas victory is not bringing to the Palestinian territories just a hotter rhetoric against Israel, but, among other things, a social order based in theocracy and religious intolerance. So, Israel is exposed to a new threat, one emerging from Islamic extremism and terrorism. As such, this has become another piece in the global puzzle the jihadists are trying to put together. Islamic extremism is getting closer and closer to Israel, threatening the stability of the whole region as well, from Jordan to Syria.

The West cannot fight this radical tide without Israel. Israel may decide that, for its own security, it should follow the traditional policy of relying on its own strengths. But Islamic extremism is more a tsunami than a tide. And in the face of this powerful force, it is imperative that we stand together.

Whether we like it or not, we live in an era of global issues, forces, and effects. Globalization is like the weather: it could be good or bad, but it is what it is. A mid-term election in the United States may have an impact on Iraq's fate—or on Israel's; a bomb in Baghdad has a clear impact in London and on the voters of Iowa; a madrasa in Pakistan could be a key element in an atrocity in Europe. That is the darker side of a global world.

DONALD RUMSFELD once said that “weakness, not strength, fuels aggression.” On that, he was entirely right. If, for whatever reason, the West becomes more divided and fragmented, it will be perceived by our foes as growing weaker. And in fact it *will* be weaker in dealing with today's and tomorrow's challenges.

I started out by saying that I believe in the West. I really do. But, in order to preserve our values, our freedom, our prosperity, we need to expand the geographical concept of the West. Today's West requires a different geography—one that includes Israel, countries from the Far East, like Japan and South Korea, and perhaps nations from other continents, like Australia, Colombia, and India.

What is at stake is not just a leader here or there among friends or adversaries. What is at stake is our civilization. It is entirely in our hands whether or not we prevail. But, from this point forward, we must take action. We must avoid bad decisions and make the right ones. And for me, bringing Israel into NATO is a correct and urgent action. It should be done and it *can* be done.

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